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OR,

THE WAY OF THE WILL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"MINNIE GREY," "GUS HOWARD," "STANFIELD HALL,
"AMY LAWRENCE," ETC.

NEW-YORK:

GARRETT & CO., 18 ANN-STREET.

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CHAPTER I.

THE DUKE—Good Palmer, is thy tale so wondrous strange?

PALMER.—Else had I not sought auditor so wise.
'Tis the best legend ever yet was heard
Unless I mar it sadly in the telling.

OLD PLAY.

In the gloomiest apartment of a gloomy old mansion, that reared its venerable, ivy-covered turrets high over the ancestral oaks that moaned dismally in the fitful wind, sat an elderly woman, whose neat attire, and somewhat lady-like manner, betrayed, at a glance, that she was the house-keeper. She was talking earnestly to her companion, a middle-aged man, whose sunburnt countenance, no less than his garb, betokened the sailor.

"Well but, aunt, why does not Colonel Mowbray come down and live here, since his brother's dead?"

"'Tis a long and a strange story, James, and, if you have the patience to listen, I will try to make the matter as plain as I can. Many years ago, the lady of Sir William Mowbray suddenly left her husband, in company with a gentleman named Lucas. She took along with her their only child, the heir of this great estate. Sir William idolized his wife and child, and never smiled again for years. His heart was broken. Time past on, and nothing happened to arouse the baronet from his grief. He moved and acted like a man in a trance, until Ellen, the daughter of his sister, who died in India, arrived at the mansion. The presence of this beautiful and good young lady, had the effect of inducing Sir William to take more interest in what was going on around him; and he soon became deeply attached to his niece, who loved him as though he had been her father. The orphan, for such Ellen was, brought with her a native woman, who had been her nurse, and who seemed to almost adore her foster child, whom she constantly waited upon. One day that Ellen was out riding, her horse ran away, and galloped with her to the very brink of a cliff, over which both horse and rider would have been dashed, had not a young man named Ashton, a nephew of old farmer Ashton, bravely caught the bridle at the risk of his own life, and pressed the horse back by main force. This brave act led to young Ashton's introduction to Sir William, who liked him much, and often invited him to the mansion. The upshot was, that the youngster fell in

love with Miss Ellen, who quickly returned the compliment."

"What," said the sailor, "the niece of the rich Sir William Mowbray fall in love with a common plough-boy?"

"Young Ashton was not a common plough-boy. He was as handsome a young man as I ever laid eyes on, and the vicar had taken great pains to make a good scholar of him. So that he was, in every way, a gentleman. Just after these things happened, a young East Indian, named Meenan Hafaz, arrived in the neighborhood. He was the son of an English officer, and an East Indian princess, and his riches were said to be too great to count. He had known Ellen in the East; indeed, they had been brought up together. Ellen's ayah having been likewise the nurse of this young prince. He was accompanied by a strange looking person, who was only known here as the Khan. He appeared to be a sort of tutor, and seemed to know every language, and, indeed, almost every thing else. The rage of Meenan Hafaz was awful when he discovered that Ellen was betrothed to young Ashton, whom he insulted, intending to kill him in a duel, for he was a dead shot. But for once he missed his aim, and was severely wounded by his rival. After this, Sir William got a situation for Ashton as an ambassador, or something of that sort in Rome. He was accompanied by young Mowbray, a son of the Colonel. They had not been gone many weeks, before Sir William was found dead in his library, and his faithful groom, Martin, who had ransacked the house by his cries, was found insensible; his skull having been fractured."

Leaving the good old lady, and her nephew, to ponder over these incidents, we will acquaint the reader with some further facts.

Previous to the death of Sir William, he had made a will, leaving the bulk of his property to Ellen, and giving his sanction to her wedding Ashton. One copy of this will the lawyer was robbed of on his way to London. It fell into the hands of a woman, who used it as a means to obtain the hand of Col. Mowbray, who would have been disinherited, had it been produced. A duplicate copy of this will, together with the family jewels, had been concealed by the baronet in a secret nook known only to himself and Martin.

Soon after Ashton and Mowbray reached Rome, Meenan Hafaz determined to remove

his rival by assassination, and for this purpose employed an accomplished, but an unprincipled fellow named Martingale. The assassin, however, struck young Mowbray instead of Ashton.

In Rome, Ashton discovered the long-lost wife of Sir William. She had taken the veil. She convinced the young man of her entire innocence of infidelity to her husband.

While these events were occurring at Rome, Meeran Hafaz was prosecuting his designs upon Ellen de Vere with the ingenuity of a fox, and the perseverance of a blood-hound. He was greatly aided in his object of obtaining the hand of the orphan, by her uncle, Col. Mowbray, who had assumed to be her guardian soon after the death of Sir William, his elder brother. This man, who was as polished as ice, and quite as cold, had far outrun his income by his profligate style of living. Gambling was added to his numerous other vices, and, as too frequently happens, from being the dupe of sharpers, he soon became transformed into a sharper himself, and sought to repair his broken fortunes by the trickery generally supposed to be practiced only by professional blacklegs. Meeran Hafaz had scarce touched the soil of England before he was surrounded by sportsmen. He bled so freely, and seemed so unsuspecting, that Col. Mowbray disregarded even the usual precautions, and upon one occasion, while throwing dice, he so repeatedly threw the highest number, that Meeran Hafaz had his suspicion awakened, and upon watching him closely, became satisfied that his *honorable* friend was robbing him with loaded dice. He, thereupon, coolly took possession of them, and handed them to Lord Yarmouth, requesting him to keep them in his hands, as a bet depended on them. Then calling the Colonel aside, coolly proposed to him that he should aid him to obtain the hand of Ellen de Vere, or else this affair of the loaded dice should be published to the world. It required little deliberation on the Colonel's part ere he decided to enter into the companionship of guilt with his task-master, and from that time he used all his influence to force Ellen to become the wife of the remorseless East Indian.

As if to facilitate the nefarious schemes of these unscrupulous men, Sir William, a short time before his untimely death, had discharged his warrener, one Will Sideler, a man with muscles of bronze and a heart of stone, apparently a preordained ruffian from his cradle. This fellow hated Sir William Mowbray, and readily lent himself to forward any plans that Meeran and the Colonel devized, either against the baronet or his lovely ward.

Lawyer Elworthy fully believed that Sir William had been foully murdered, and that the trusty old groom, Martin, had received the wound that deprived him of reason, while attempting to defend his master's life. Full of this idea, he had Martin brought blindfolded into the library where the dreadful deed had been committed. Just as the chimes in the neighboring church struck

the hour of midnight, the old groom's eyes appeared slowly to regain their wonted expression, and moved around the room, until they fell upon the chair of the baronet (which had been purposely placed in the position it occupied on the night of the fatal deed) he then uttered a cry of terror that chilled the blood in the veins of his hearers, and sprang toward the chair, as if to place his body between the assassin and his victim. He then, as if reenacting the horrors of that eventful night, went through a series of pantomimic struggles, as though striving with some visionary antagonist, and then pointing for a few seconds at a particular spot in the wall, slowly relapsed into faintness. Acting upon this hint, the wainscoting was sounded and discovered to be hollow. It was broken through, and discovered steps leading to a secret recess, in which was found the articles so anxiously sought for by the lawyer.

Pursuant to a plot contrived by Colonel Mowbray and Meeran Hafaz, Ellen was carried to an old mansion called Cromwell House. The sequestered position of this place, and the reputation of its being haunted, it bore, among the neighboring country-folks, admirably fitted it for deeds that would not bear the glance of scrutiny.

Ellen was here kept under the closest surveillance. The only consolation she had, was that a faithful attendant, Susan, was permitted to wait upon her. This young girl was engaged to a countryman, named Joe Beans, a steadfast friend of the absent Ashton. This damsel had been persuaded by her lover to accept the situation of waiting maid to Ellen, in order to be near her person, and assist in baffling the machinations of Meeran and her crafty uncle.

CHAPTER II.

Owls make their home ; the raven haunts each tower ;
The crumbling walls are with strange echoes fill'd ;
The peasant, homeward wending from his fields,
Quickeys his toll-worn steps as they approach
The solitary pile.

KIRWAN.

ONE morning, when Susan descended from the chamber of Ellen, where she had passed the night, to the servants' hall of Cromwell House, she was startled at finding Will Sideler, the warrener, seated by the fire, which burnt briskly in the grate ; everything else in the place bore that lonely, deserted appearance which strikes a chill both on the heart and mind. With all her self-possession, she could not conceal the alarm which the presence of the ruffian occasioned her. She had heard her lover, Joe Beans, speak of him frequently as a man suspected of many crimes — a fellow fitted by the malignant depravity of his heart for any act, however desperate ; a ready tool for those who could minister to his ruling passion—avarice.

The honest rustic, in his moments of confidence, had imparted to her his vague suspicions that he was no stranger to the

death of Sir William Mowbray; also his attempt upon poor old Martin in the churchyard. No wonder, therefore, that she looked upon his presence as an ill omen for her young mistress, and probable danger for herself.

Will, who was probably aware of the courtship between Joe and the pretty rustic, eyed her with a glance in which insult and mockery were blended; and the idea of avenging himself upon the man whose strong arm had struck him down, glided like a serpent into his heart.

"Good morning, my pretty lass!" he exclaimed: "this old house does not appear half so dull since I have seen you."

"You will see but little of me," replied Susan, endeavoring to suppress her fear and indignation at his familiarity: "my time is generally passed with my young lady."

"We can relieve you of that portion of your duty," observed the ruffian, sneeringly; "the silly girl has one to attend her who will replace your services—one to whom she is more accustomed, and *quite as faithful!*"

"Indeed!" answered the girl, with affected indifference; "the place is not so agreeable that I care to remain in it: I can return home."

"Return home!" repeated the warrener, in the tone of a man very much amused by some absurd idea; "of course you can—what should prevent you? Nothing! nothing in the world!" he added, mockingly. "I should advise you by all means to return home—*as soon as you can!*"

The marked emphasis which the speaker laid upon the last words of his insulting speech, caused the heart of the pretty Susan to beat with apprehensions which had never startled her innocent heart before. While uttering it, the eyes of the ruffian had wandered over her person with an expression which mantled her cheek with blushes. In her distress, she almost regretted having yielded to the solicitations of her lover, and accepted the dangerous part she was acting.

"We shall see what Lady Mowbray will say to this!" she exclaimed, as she attempted to leave the room.

"Lady Mowbray," replied Will Sideler, with provoking calmness, "left last night for London."

"The colonel, then!"

"He accompanied her," added the ruffian. "With the exception of Miss Ellen's new attendant, you and I are the only persons in the house: the keys are in my possession."

As he spoke, he drew from his pocket a large bunch of keys, and shook them insultingly in her face.

"We shall be excellent friends!" he continued; "especially at night, when the hours are dark and long, and the wind wails and cries like a human thing, through the corridors and halls of this old mansion: we shall be glad of each other's society then—I hate the night!"

"Perhaps," said Susan, bitterly, "it reminds you of your evil deeds!"

A dark scowl overshadowed the features of the warrener: he sprang from his seat, and advanced towards her, demanding, as she retreated before him:

"What deeds, fool? what deeds?"

In his fury, the wretch most probably would have struck her, or proceeded to some other act of outrage equally unmannerly, had not the door of the room suddenly opened, and a boy, apparently about thirteen years of age, made his appearance: he was clad in a wretched suit of parish clothes, the most glaring imperfections of which were covered by a smock-frock; he had neither hat nor cap to guard his head from sunshine and showers—but nature had provided him with a substitute, in the enormous mass of red, shaggy hair with which his skull was thatched. His features were broad, flat, and inexpressive; the only symptom of intelligence was in his small, deep-set eyes, which never seemed for an instant at rest: they glanced first from the countenance of Susan to that of the warrener, then became suddenly attracted to the smoke-jack, set in motion by the fire, which, probably for the first time for many years, had been lighted in the enormous grate.

"Who in the fiend's name are you?" demanded Will Sideler.

"Eh!" ejaculated the boy, with a stare of wonder.

"Who are you, I say?" continued the ruffian, seizing him by the shoulder, and shaking him violently; "and how did you gain admittance here?"

"I be Remnant's boy, and looks arter the cows? Who be thee?"

Remnant was the name of the tenant who farmed the land attached to Cromwell House. This the warrener knew, and his alarm at once was dissipated.

"And how did you gain admittance here?" he continued.

"Can't ye see!" replied the lad, holding up a large, rusty key, which was instantly snatched from his hand. "Who be that young woman?" pointing to Susan.

While the poor girl was meditating how to make the intrusion of the speaker available in some manner for her protection, her persecutor, who had never once quitted his hold of the boy, drew him from the room—led him through the courtyard to the side-door by which he had entered, and dismissed him with strict injunctions not to intrude there again, as the gentleman who had taken the place had a great dislike to strangers.

"But I beant no stranger!" observed the intruder. "I know'd the house ever since I wot no older than Brindle Bet's last calf. Mother lived here in old lady's time."

Without listening to any further explanation or excuse, Sideler pushed the lad through the gate, and added a blow, by way of intimating the treatment he might expect if ever he ventured to show his face upon the premises again.

As the door closed, Red Ralph, as he was generally called in the village, cast a bitter look towards his assailant, and muttered between his teeth, that he would return in spite of him.

He kept his word.

Accustomed from his earliest childhood to wander about the place, he had none of the superstitious fears respecting it which were entertained by the lower orders in Mortlake. As he used to observe to his master, he had never seen anything worse there nor himself—the ghosts had never hurt him; and he felt a secret pride in having terrors which he took no small pains to propagate. Many a half-pint of home-brewed had he obtained from the wives of the market-gardeners, for relating the tales of Cromwell House.

The instant the warrener left the servant's-hall, Susan ran, as fast as her agitation permitted her, to the chamber of her young lady—the door was locked.

"Open, Miss Ellen!" she exclaimed; "for heaven's sake open the door!"

"I cannot, my poor girl," replied the orphan; "I am a prisoner!"

The ayah smiled.

"In the hands of my bitterest enemy!" continued the speaker.

The silence which Ellen had hitherto observed towards her former attendant, had only tended to raise the evil passions of the Indian woman, who, by one of those strange contradictions in our nature, both loved and desired to be loved, by the being she was persecuting; but when she heard the child she had nurtured at her breast designate her as her *bitterest enemy*, her eyes became clouded; the words struck upon her heart; the first impression was made, although she was scarcely conscious of the change herself.

"Bitterest enemy!" she repeated; "because I will not see you disgrace yourself by bestowing your hand upon a churl—a peasant! Because I wish to see you rich and happy! Be it so! I can bear even that for your sake!"

Her former mistress disdained to reply to her. It appeared like treason to the absent to vindicate her choice. It was her pride and consolation. A heavy step was heard ascending the staircase; it was the warrener's. The heart of poor Susan beat wildly with terror and disgust. Clinging to the door, she entreated—almost shrieked for admittance; using, in her deep agony, the words which women utter when alarmed by the approach of brutal violence, threatening more than life.

"Open, for mercy's sake!" she exclaimed, addressing the ayah; "as you are a woman, have pity on your sex! I have never injured you! Why blight my young existence? Pity! Pity!"

The loud shriek which followed, announced that her persecutor had already laid his grasp upon her shoulder. Still she clung to the door of the apartment with desperate strength. Zara remained unmoved.

The features of Ellen became dreadfully convulsed, as she listened to the cries of her humble friend, and felt her inability to save her. Pride, resentment, all gave way before the danger of the despairing girl, whose shrieks were mingled with the half-uttered oaths of Will Sideler, whose passions were now completely roused. She cast herself at the feet of her gaoler, with the intention of imploring her interference—but the words choked her, and, with a wild sob, like that which comes from a broken heart—she sank senseless on the floor. The ayah raised her, and saw, to her terror, that blood was oozing from the lips of the unhappy orphan.

With the rapidity of thought she raised her desolate charge, placed her upon the couch, and then threw open the door of the chamber. The ruffian had already succeeded in dragging his victim partially down the great staircase. We say partially, for Susan still clung with the tenacity of despair to the massive oaken banisters. More than once Sideler had recourse to blows to induce her to quit her hold. Just as he had succeeded in dragging her to the great hall, Zara confronted him. Despite her devotion to Meera Hafaz, her heart was not all of clay, and her womanly nature was roused to indignation when she witnessed the state to which Susan was reduced.

Few, judging from her slender figure, would have imagined the great personal strength of the Indian woman. In an instant she snatched the all but senseless girl from his fierce grasp, and stood like a roused pantheress, with scornful lips and flashing eyes glaring upon him.

"What now?" muttered the villain. "Fool!" exclaimed the ayah; "miserable fool! Is it for this that your employer has bought you body and soul—paid for your services with gold which might have gained a Brahmin's faith?"

"She is a spy!" muttered the warrener. "She is a woman!" replied Zara.

"And what do you call the one up stairs?" demanded the fellow, insolently. "Is she less fair—less young—less delicate—less helpless? I but follow the example of him we both serve."

This was the second time, during the morning, that the ayah had had her conduct towards Ellen reflected, as it were, in a mirror before her—that she had been compelled, as it were, to see herself, the moral depravity into which, step by step, she had been led—and the lesson was not thrown away.

"You cannot judge my motives," she said.

"Nor you mine!" replied Will Sideler. "It is not that I care so much for the girl, as the hatred I feel towards her lover, who struck me—spurned, insulted—more, who threatened me! I swore at the time to be avenged upon him, and shall keep my promise; so you had better," he added, in a conciliatory tone, at the same time advancing towards Susan, who clung in breathless

terror to her protectress—"leave the wench with me, and attend to your own charge in the chamber above."

"Save me from him!" faintly murmured the poor girl; "I have no hope but you!"

"I will not fail you," answered Zara, resolutely; "although I have little cause to love you, for you have supplanted me in the love of my foster-child! Back, ruffian—back!" she added, addressing the disappointed warrener; "lay but a finger on her, and I will slay thee as I would a cub from the jungle, or a reptile that had crossed my path!"

It was not the first time that Will Sideler had seen the keen, sharp blade which glittered in the hand of the speaker—for, as we before had occasion to observe, the ayah never went unarmed. He knew her courage, and more than suspected her address in the use of the weapon.

In the struggle which had just taken place, his neckcloth had fallen, and the eyes of Zara were fixed upon his throat, like those of a serpent meditating where to strike. He was cowed, subdued; for, like most cruel natures, his heart was cowardly—courageous only with the helpless and unarmed.

Muttering something about "women's fancies" and "another opportunity," he retreated sullenly from the hall, baffled and disappointed—but still bent on destroying, if possible, the happiness of his enemy, Joe Beans, and the innocent Susan.

On reaching the chamber of Ellen, the Indian and the rescued girl both occupied themselves—despite the weakness and recent agitation of the latter—in recovering the unhappy orphan from the state into which the scene of the morning had thrown her.

It was long—very long—before their efforts were successful. When life returned, it was evident that the mind of the persecuted prisoner had received a shock from which it would not easily recover. At the sight of the ayah she screamed violently, and hid her face in the bosom of Susan, calling upon her murdered uncle and Henry to protect her. Each time the guilty woman attempted to renew her attentions, the paroxysm returned, and she found herself condemned to witness her foster-child receive from another those services which her heart yearned to offer. Like many other passionate natures, she had calculated only her strength—not her weakness.

Dissatisfied with herself and the part she had undertaken, but still resolved to persevere, she removed to a distance, and sat silently watching them. Instead of abating, the exclamations of Ellen increased in incoherency, the expression of her eyes became more wild. It was evident that fever had seized upon her brain.

Susan was in despair, and Zara—the conscience-stricken Zara—truly wretched. Her crimes became their own avenger.

A light step was heard upon the stairs. The sufferer, with the quickness of insanity, recognised it: it was Meeran's. With a

shriek that made the walls of the old chamber ring, she sprang from the arms of Susan, and would have dashed herself through the window to avoid him, had not the ayah intercepted her, and bore her back to the bed, upon which she replaced her in a state of insensibility.

It was fortunate that the guilty woman still retained her presence of mind. Leaving her charge to the care of the weeping girl who hung over her, she left the room, time enough to prevent the entrance of her persecutor, whose presence she felt assured would cause her death. Raising her finger to her lips, to command silence, she motioned him to retrace his steps. The young man wonderingly obeyed her.

"What has happened?" he demanded, anxiously.

"The hound," replied Zara, speaking in the figurative language of the East, "has presumed to hunt on its own account, and startle the deer reserved for its master!"

"What mean you?"

A few brief words put him in possession of all that had taken place: the ruffian conduct of the warrener, the danger of Susan, and the state into which it had thrown the unhappy object of his persecution and love.

As the ayah concluded the latter part of her narration, the usually impassible countenance of Meeran Hafaz became dark with passion. Bitterly did the proud youth feel the degradation of the association into which his evil genius had betrayed him.

It was a fortunate thing for Will Sideler that he was not present at the outbreak of the storm, whose lightnings would have scathed him off shore. No oot issa yead

"Dog!" exclaimed the young Indian, his eyes glancing round the hall as if in search of the object of his wrath.

"Miserable villain! was it for this I bought and trusted him? I'll trample the life from his hideous carcass, and leave his felon limbs to blacken in the sun!"

"You dare not!" observed Zara, calmly.

"Dare not?" he repeated, scornfully.

"You are in his power!" added the woman. "Oh that my child had never visited this accursed land! Had she remained in India, her young heart would have known no other love—you would have been free from crime as well as danger—and I happy in the union of my foster-children, which now appears a dream—a hopeless dream!"

Meeran eyed her for an instant suspicously.

"A dream which shall be realised!" he exclaimed, advancing towards the staircase which led to the apartment of Ellen.

"The only hand which could oppose it," quietly observed Zara, "has passed between you!"

"Whose?"

"The hand of death!" she calmly replied; "its shadow is already over her! At the sound of your step she sprang from the bed, and would have found refuge in the grave from your approach—by dashing herself through the window—had I not prevented

her: your presence at once destroys her." The heart of Meeran—in which every generous impulse was not yet entirely crushed—sank fearfully at her words; for they convinced him how deep must be the love of the orphan for his rival—how hopeless his chance of supplanting that love; true, he might obtain possession, by violence, of her hand and person—reconcile her, perhaps, to a dull and soulless existence; but win from her the exchange of heart for heart—the sympathies which twine the hymeneal chain with flowers, make suffering pleasure and gild the snows of age with spring's sweet sunshine—never—never.

As the conviction gradually pressed upon him, *then commenced his punishment.*

Ellen was ill, suffering—perhaps dying—yet he dared not visit her, lest his voice and presence should in an instant snap the slender thread of life—or, in the desolation of her soul, the fever of her brain, her lips should curse him. Should he call in medical aid, all would be discovered—and yet to risk the loss of her *and well!*

Meeran Hafaz clasped his hands to his burning brow, to hide the tears which, despite his pride and passion, fell like drops of molten lead upon his cheek. *giving up!*

The ayah was moved by the agony of her foster-son. At present she was a stranger to the promptings of her own heart—she heard its whisperings, but without comprehending them. *old life over!* *no longer*

"She must be saved, at all risks!" murmured the young Indian. *live and dying!* "Leave her to me," replied the woman; "thou knowest that I possess no mean skill in herbs and plants of many virtues. I have sat too oft beside the couch of those I loved, not to discern the approach of death—the gradual dimming of the eye—the fluttering pulse—the moisture of the skin—the hard-drawn breath: should such signs appear—" *and has imagined*

"Send instantly for the best advice gold can procure!" interrupted Meeran. "Day and night a horse shall be saddled in the stables! I will leave Zadag—this was the name of the Indian boy who attended him—with you! Stay!" he added, the fear of losing her blinding him to every other fear; "I will seek and bring you aid myself!" So saying, he rushed like a madman from the house, to give orders for his departure. *to frame*

"He is worthy of her!" muttered the ayah, with a look of affection: "and never shall another call her bride!" Then, as if some secret monitor reproved her words, she added, slowly, "unless the bride of death!" *to hold her out of his way*

Full of this resolution, she returned to the chamber of the suffering girl.

CHAPTER III.

Friendship, like love, is oft the hollow mask
Of a more hollow heart. Words are the coin
With which men cheat their fellow-men.
Fools only trust, to be deceived.

HAR OF THE SEPT.

TEN days elapsed before Doctor Kissock,

who really took a deep interest in the progress of his patient, ventured to give any positive hope of his ultimate recovery. Meanwhile the Roman police pretended to use every exertion in order to trace out the assassin; but, as usual, without success. They had been too well paid to compromise each other. It is rarely, very rarely, that those who attempt the life of a foreigner are brought to justice in the Eternal City: consequently, the tariff for assassinating a foreigner is much lighter than for a native of Italy, or a citizen, who have generally friends to clamor loudly, and stimulate, by their indignant remonstrances, the laggard steps of justice. *more and more bad*

During this anxious interval, Henry Ashton was a close prisoner by the bedside of his friend; who would receive no medicine but from his hand, nor permit—with the waywardness of suffering—any other to smooth his pillow. Fortunately the fever which supervened was slight, and, at the end of the tenth day, totally disappeared. *inhabitants to assist*

Then it was that the kind-hearted physician ventured to express his first decided hope. *old life over!* *no longer*

Amongst the visitors which interest or curiosity drew to the hotel, none were more constant than Robert Martingale; true, he was not admitted into the chamber of the wounded man—but our hero contrived when he came to quit it for an instant, press him by the hand, thank him for his sympathy, and express how deeply he felt the friendship which displayed itself at such a moment. He even commissioned him to make daily inquiries for him at the post-office for his long, anxiously expected letters from England.

It was not till the fourth or fifth day that the arch-deceiver ventured to present him with one which he had fabricated, from Ellen: he smiled as the deceived lover pressed the superscription to his lips, and murmured, in accents which indicated how much they relieved his heart: *old life over!*

"Thank heaven! at last!"

We presume that it is scarcely necessary to explain to our readers that the correspondence of the lovers had been suppressed at the post-office—by bribing the *employes*. At Rome such persons are generally so wretchedly paid, that they would not only risk their appointments, but their salvation to boot, for a handful of ducats—and Martingale was most liberal.

Possessing the letters thus cruelly intercepted, it became no difficult matter for an expert master of caligraphy like himself, to imitate the hand and even the style of the artless writer.

"You smile!" he said, as our hero eagerly perused each line of what he believed to be the writing of Ellen. "Pleasant intelligence, no doubt!" he added: "and not the less welcome for having been so long delayed!"

"Welcome—most welcome!" exclaimed Henry Ashton; "it has relieved my heart of the worst agony—suspense; informs me

of the recovery of a dear and valued friend from a most dangerous illness ; the writer, like myself, has been chained by affection to the bed of sickness," he added, "but, thank heaven! every cause for uneasiness has passed!"

The emissary of Mareen Hafaz was secretly delighted at the gullibility of his dupe—at the tact with which he had deceived him. So cleverly had he described the pretended illness of Sir William Mowbray, and the cares and fears of his niece, that the confiding youth doubted not for an instant but the letter was from Ellen ; not a word which did not breathe the deep and earnest love of the grateful girl for her second father. Little did he imagine that the baronet had been for weeks the tenant of an untimely grave.

During the long hours he had passed by the couch of Walter, Henry Ashton had occupied himself in drawing up a statement of the melancholy circumstances under which Lady Mowbray had been induced to accept the veil—the extraordinary disappearance of her child, whom for many years she had been led to believe safe in the arms of its father—and concluded by a demand for a dispensation from her ill-considered vows—or, if that were refused, permission to visit England. This, as his friend was still progressing favorably, he resolved to lose no time in forwarding to the congregation of *rites*, to whom such demands were usually preferred ; for which purpose he sent for a procurator. The man was an honest one.

"Have you any interest to back your memorial?" he demanded, after he had carefully perused the papers.

"None," replied our hero, "but the justness of my prayer."

His visitor shook his head.

"What?" exclaimed the indignant youth, "a wife—an English matron—fouly lured from the arms of her husband—her son, the heir of one of the noblest names and fortunes in England, disposed of—no one knows how! Such an appeal cannot be permitted to remain unanswered!"

"It will be answered!" replied the procurator with a smile.

"And how?"

"Unfavorably!" replied the experienced legalist : "the prayer itself is most unusual. But that is not the greatest difficulty," he added ; "the Abbate Lucas is a member of the sacred congregation to whom it is addressed."

This was a blow which Henry had not expected ; he determined to persevere, nevertheless, and directed the procurator to forward the memorial. In a fortnight it was returned under an official cover : the demand was rejected.

"Henry," said his friend, who saw, despite the effort which he made to conceal it, that something had occurred to irritate and vex him ; "I must insist upon your once more mingling in the world. I am better—much better now! I know by experience how wearying are the long days and nights

passed in a sick chamber, even when suffering enchains us there ; in health they must be doubly irksome!"

"Irksome?" repeated Henry, in a tone of deep feeling ; "no, dear Walter—no!"

"Not to friendship, Harry," continued the invalid, with a faint smile, "but to love—to duty, if you will. I know not what has occurred, but something, I am sure, which gives you the desire of freedom—action. I can read it in your eyes," he added ; therefore it is vain for your lips to deny it!"

Our hero could not deny it—therefore remained silent.

"If only for a few hours," urged Walter ; "Martingale will, I am sure, remain with me!"

The deceiver, who had been within the last few days a constant visitor in the sick room of the speaker, eagerly expressed his willingness to undertake the task of nurse, in the absence of Henry.

"I shall not be as kind, but I will endeavor to prove as faithful a one!" he observed with affected *bonhomie*.

It would have been unkind longer to have resisted their solicitations, and the young man suffered himself to be persuaded.

"My first visit," he said, aloud, "will be to the Duchess, whose inquiries have been incessant after your progress ; my next to the Palazzo Borghese. Have you any message," he added, sinking his voice to a whisper, "for any one I may encounter there?"

The blood faintly rushed to the still pale cheek of Walter Mowbray, as he pressed the hand of his friend, and then pointed to the withered rose which Therese Colonna had left on the occasion of her visit, and which was carefully preserved in a silver vase beside him.

"I understand—I will be eloquent!"

"And discreet?" added the invalid, in the same suppressed tone.

"As all who love should be," replied our hero, as he withdrew to make preparation for his visit. "You are quite safe!"

On entering the boudoir of the Duchess of Devonshire, who welcomed him with the warm interest of a friend, Henry Ashton was much struck by the appearance of a gentleman whom he had not previously encountered in any of the salons of the Roman nobility ; this was no other than the celebrated Sir Thomas Lawrence, who, if he was not the first painter, was certainly one of the most elegant men of his day. His visit to the Eternal City had been made by command of the Prince Regent of England, in order to paint the portrait of the amiable Pius VII., who then sat in the chair of St. Peter. From his easy, graceful manner, and the studied absence in conversation of everything which might have a political allusion, he had become a great favorite with the Pontiff, who used to call him "my painter," and frequently declared that no one, save the heretic Englishman, had ever made at the same time a portrait and a pic-

ture of him. How far the commendation was merited, those who have seen the likeness in the gallery at Windsor can judge—at least in the latter instance.

"And what do you intend to do?" demanded the duchess, as her visitor concluded his narration of the refusal of the congregation of *rites* to accede to the prayer of Lady Mowbray.

"Appeal to the Cardinal Gonzalvi!"

Her grace shook her head discouragingly. She knew that his eminence, although minister, seldom ventured to interfere in such matters—his influence being regarded by the sacred college, the holy office and the congregation of *rites*, with extreme jealousy: the reason was, that, although a cardinal, he was not a priest.

"He could not serve you," she said, "even if he would; he has too many enemies to risk it!"

"In that case," replied Henry, "I will appeal to the Pope himself: he has suffered, and suffering should have taught him mercy. But permit me, your grace," he added, "to doubt the disinclination of the cardinal to serve me. I have some reason to believe that it was to his interference I owe the privilege of an interview with the unhappy Lady Mowbray."

"Hush! that was easily arranged," whispered the kind-hearted woman; "because it could be done *privately*. Had you demanded such a permission through the usual channel, it might have been a year before you obtained it. Stay!" she continued, a thought suddenly striking her; "here is the very person who can best assist you."

She gracefully invited the artist to approach, and rapidly related to him the history of Lady Mowbray, and the difficulty of her *protégé*. With the former portion of her narration Sir Thomas was already acquainted: he had painted her soon after she became a bride, and heard of her supposed lapse from virtue with regret. As the duchess proceeded, he became deeply interested.

"Poor lady!" he exclaimed, with a sigh; "her fate is indeed a sad one, and, I believe, unmerited; but, as respects her husband, your efforts, unfortunately, are too late."

"Too late!" repeated both the duchess and our hero.

"Yes; a letter, which I received at least a month since from England, mentioned his death. Some think he died a suicide; others, that he was murdered."

"Murdered!" exclaimed Henry Ashton; "impossible! I this very morning received a letter from"—his niece, he was about to say, but delicacy restrained him—"one," he added, "who watched by his sick couch with the affectionate solicitude of a child! Read!—read!"

He placed the letter which Martingale had brought him in the hands of the duchess.

"Your informant must have been deceived, Sir Thomas," she observed, as soon

as she had perused it, and marked the date; "this was written not quite three weeks since—written by the side of his sick bed, by one who must have known."

"Possibly," replied the painter, doubtfully: "your grace knows how report is liable to err; and yet—no matter; as you say, I must have been misinformed."

Although fully convinced that his information was correct—for the details of the unhappy affair had been too circumstantial to admit of a doubt in his own mind—the speaker resolved to make himself yet further acquainted with the particulars before he alluded to the subject again, and begged of her grace to point out in what way he could have the pleasure of obliging her, or being useful to Mr. Ashton.

"Present him," said the duchess.

"Willingly," said the artist, after a pause, during which he considered that, as his portrait was nearly finished, the cardinals, many of whom, from jealousy, made a point of being present at his sittings, could not interfere with that. "The first time I am summoned to the Vatican, I will drop your young friend a note. I do not think," he added, with a smile of benevolent interest, "that the Holy Father will receive him less cordially than he is presented by a poor painter, instead of a prince of the Church, as he was promised."

Our hero was profuse in the expression of his gratitude, and soon after took his leave. The kind-hearted hostess seized the occasion of a *tête-à-tête* with her remaining visitor, to relate all that she had heard from the late baronet respecting his young *protégé*. The heart of the painter warmed as he proceeded. Like Henry Ashton, he had risen from the people, and, despite his courtier-like manners, and the artificial atmosphere in which he moved, his sympathies were with them.

"What a noble head he has!" he observed, with professional gusto: "it would show splendidly upon canvas."

"And, from your easel," replied the duchess, "would be worth a thousand guineas, at the very least; although I fear it would scarcely realise as many shillings on the shoulders of its possessor, were he in poverty."

Most women, it is said, reserve the most important parts of their correspondence for the postscript: her grace, faithful to the tactics of her sex, kept the request she was most anxious to make to the last; it was not till Sir Thomas Lawrence had risen to take his leave, that she ventured to urge it.

"Come," she said, extending her hand, with one of her most winning smiles; "you must not refuse me. I ask it, by the recollections of our old friendship!"

The courtly painter bowed, and kissed the fair hand held out to him, gallantly observing that it was impossible to refuse a request so flatteringly urged.

"You promise, then?"

"I promise!"

And her visitor took his leave.

What that promise was, and how it was fulfilled, must appear in another place.

Henry Ashton next directed his steps to the Borghese Palace. The groom of the chambers, accustomed to admit him at all times to the *salons* and even the boudoir of his mistress, ushered him at once to the apartment in which the beautiful Pauline was seated, with her mother, Madame Letitia, and her sister Caroline, the ex-Queen of Naples.

"Who is this young man?" demanded the mother of the fallen Emperor, in a severe tone, "admitted thus unceremoniously to your presence?"

Although the words had been uttered in a whisper, Henry Ashton heard them. He remembered the words of the Duchess of Devonshire, at the Princess Doria's ball, and he hesitated to advance. He respected even the prejudices of the woman of so many sorrows—

"The Niobe of modern years,"

as Byron poetically called her.

"I believe," replied her daughter, "that he is an admirer of Therese Colonna."

"And an Englishman?"

"Something of that kind," added Pauline, petulantly. "How can you expect me to remember the nationality of all the men who are presented to me?"

"*Inglesi!*" exclaimed Caroline, spitefully: "I can read it in his eyes!"

"You have been accustomed to do so!" replied her sister, sarcastically; for she cared little for the opinion of the ex-queen, however she might dread the severe rebuke of her mother: "You courted so many of his countrymen at Naples, that poor Joachim used to complain at last that your accent became English!"

Remembering what was due to his own dignity, our hero advanced, and paid his homage to the mistress of the mansion, with that quiet ease and self-possession which marks the consciousness of merit.

"The Signor Ashton," said the princess, presenting him to her parent and sister by name, "on a mission from the English government to Italy."

This sounded well, and the brow of Madame slightly unbent as she returned the profound salute which the young man made to her misfortunes, rather than her titular rank, as mother of a fallen sovereign.

The ex-Queen of Naples was too deeply offended by her sister's unkind allusion to utter a word.

"I have met but few of your countrymen," observed madame, struck by the really distinguished air of the young diplomat; and they have not all produced the same favorable impression as the Signor Ashton."

"The honor of this presentation is doubly grateful to me," replied our hero: "and I cannot sufficiently express my gratitude to her imperial highness for making me known to the mother of the illustrious man whose genius has left its impress on the progress

of nations—whose fall," he added, in a tone of deep respect, "even his enemies deplore!"

At this moment Therese Colonna entered the apartment, in her usual quiet manner; with Madame Mère she was really a favorite.

"Come hither, child," she said, extending her hand to the fair girl, "and aid me to thank the first Englishman who has rendered justice to the misfortunes and genius of my son!"

Henry bore in his hand a full-blown rose. Therese understood the signal. When her lover was first wounded, he had sent her a bud of the same flower, scarcely developed. Every morning, as the patient slowly progressed towards convalescence, the token had been renewed, its tender leaves more and more unfolded. The eyes of the high-born daughter of the Colonnas sparkled as they glanced upon the flower in his hand—it announced the certain recovery of his friend.

As well as her agitation would permit, she murmured a few words expressive of her gratitude.

Pauline was too experienced in the language of the heart and eyes not to notice her embarrassment, and a pang of jealousy rose within her breast. For, without being absolutely in love with the young barbarian—as she once called him—she had taken a caprice, which, in Italy, is near akin to it. Suspecting that the rose contained a billet intended for Therese, she stretched forth her hand, exclaiming:

"Oh, Signor Ashton, what a beautiful flower!"

He had nothing left but to present it. This he did in so unembarrassed a manner, that her suspicions were dissipated, and soon after he took his leave, satisfied with having given consolation to the heart which beat so warmly for his friend.

CHAPTER IV.

Could we but analyse those secret springs
From which the heart's strange contradictions rise;
Its changing purpose—bright imaginings—
Its vain regrets—a worm which never dies—
We should discern, 'mid passion's strife, that all
Of Eden fell not in our parents' fall.

ITALY, BY THE AUTHOR OF THE JESUIT.

WHEN Meoran Hafaz started from Mortlake, he was in a condition scarcely less to be pitied than his victim's. His heart was torn by remorse at her danger. Horror of himself—pity for her sufferings—the thought that his cruelty had driven her to the verge of madness—to the grave, perchance—was more than he could bear. The hand he had so recklessly braved at last had struck him.

"God!" he murmured, apostrophizing the Deity whose laws he had broken; "spare me this proof of Thy power, and I will own Thee! Fresh in her youth and innocence, let not the worm pollute her lip—her voice of music be hushed in death! Death!" he repeated, with an involuntary

shudder, "to the guilty soul more tremendous than annihilation!"

With the usual inconsistency of his ill-regulated mind, he forgot that there was an embrace that could pollute more than the earthworm's kiss—a cry to whose despairing agony the silence of the grave would appear as mercy.

The colonel and Lady Mowbray were both seated in the drawing-room of their London mansion, when the young Indian, with bloodshot eyes and haggard features, appeared before them. Even the heartless woman, appalled at the change a few hours had produced, demanded what had happened.

"She is dying!" hoarsely murmured Meeran. "We have murdered her!"

He cast himself upon the seat beside her, despair in every look. The colonel rose from his seat, and whispered a few words in his ear. The young man started as if a serpent had hissed in it.

"No!" he exclaimed, "I am not that monster yet! I would win her love—not destroy the perfume of the flower I prize! I am not so vile a thing as your base nature would suppose: from any act of unmanly violence of mine she is safe. Safe," he added, with a burst of remorse, "as an infant nestled at its mother's breast! Safe as an angel at the shrine it worships!"

"Quite poetical, I declare," observed Lady Mowbray, with a sneer. "This penitence is a fit episode for such romantic passion! Better at once resign her, send for your rival from Italy, place her hand in his, and die: or return to India a wiser man than you left, but not a happier one."

At the allusion to Henry Ashton, the evil principle in Meeran's nature once more prevailed. The artful woman had touched the chords aright, and the response answered to her wish.

"Never!" he exclaimed bitterly; "never—never! I would rather see her dead than in his arms! The agony in losing her would be nothing in comparison to the torment of knowing that she was another's. My brain is fevered! I am unreasonable—wretched—mad! Pity me—counsel and console me!"

This was the very state of mind to which Lady Mowbray wished to bring him. She treated the illness of Ellen as something slight—an hysterical attack, from which a few days' repose would see her recover. The heartless woman even suggested that she had deceived the ayah by imitating illness.

"Zara has watched her from her childhood," answered Meeran, somewhat more collectedly, "and is not to be deceived."

"Bribed her, then?" added the colonel.

"And what price could bribe the foster-mother to deceive her child?" demanded the young Indian, scornfully. "Her life has been devoted to me. To see me happy in the love of Ellen, she would sacrifice it without a sigh, and think that happiness too cheaply purchased. She has descended even to crime for my sake," he added.

"Zara, the Hindoo, must not be judged as you would judge one of your faith and country. *She is not to be bought!*"

The unprincipled woman of the world colored, even through her rouge, at the reproof thus sarcastically conveyed; and, to conceal her confusion and anger, left the room.

"Meeran," said the colonel, as soon as they were alone, "for the first time you have betrayed irresolution and weakness."

"How so?" haughtily demanded the young man.

"By bandying words with a woman: they are their natural weapons—men should disdain them; but enough of this—the danger of my niece requires action, not reproaches. I am acquainted with a man whose skill as a physician is unquestioned, but whose character is more than doubtful; for gold," he added, "he would lend himself to any action, however vile or good—provided you gratify his avarice, he is indifferent which."

"Where does he reside?"

"In a miserable street near the Almony," replied the unnatural relative of the persecuted girl. "I forgot its name, but know where to find him."

Meeran's impatience would not permit them to lose an instant. His carriage was still at the door, and in a few minutes they were on the road to the French doctor's, as he was usually called in the neighborhood where he resided.

Quitting the carriage at the abbey, the colonel and his companion threaded their way through the infected purlieus of the Almony, till they reached a close, narrow street, which has since disappeared before the hand of modern improvement. Without hesitation, or once mistaking his road, the former walked hastily on till he reached a small shop, with old-fashioned windows, through which it was impossible even for the lynx-eye of curiosity to peer, so dim were they from the accumulated dust of years. A few vases, filled with colored waters—a solitary snake in spirits—together with the head of a New Zealand chief, were the only indications of the pursuits of the occupant of the house: not even his name appeared over the door—and yet that name was well known to many who dwelt in curtained saloons, and were waited on by liveried menials; but vice brings round strange acquaintances.

"Where is your master?" demanded Colonel Mowbray, of a simple-looking country boy, who was pounding drugs in a mortar upon the counter.

"In the study, with a lady."

"Say I wish to see him."

"I dare not!" answered the lad.

"Why so?"

"He has forbidden me," was the reply; "he has many such visitors," continued the youth, "not poor people, but ladies—real ladies, who pay for his services in gold! He is a wonderfully skilful man—and that is why the regular doctors are so envious of him."

After waiting for nearly half-an-hour—which to the impatient Meeran seemed an age—the door of the inner apartment opened, and the shrivelled form of Doctor Guyot appeared upon the threshold, ushering out a female, whose simple but rich attire denoted that she was of no ordinary rank. The folds of the large cashmere which veiled her form, without concealing the grace of her walk and manner, betrayed to the experienced eyes of the two gentlemen that she was of the same class as themselves. As she passed near them—although the shop was sufficiently obscure to render recognition, even had they known her, all but impossible—she raised her handkerchief to her features, which were covered with a thick veil.

"That was no vulgar hand!" observed the colonel, in a whisper, to his companion, who simply nodded assent.

"Now, gentlemen," said the owner of the singular establishment, "what is your pleasure with me?"

"A consultation."

"Private?"

"Private!" repeated the colonel, placing a marked emphasis on the word. "You shall not have to complain of your remuneration!"

The doctor led the way to the back room which he had so lately quitted—carefully closed the inner and outward doors, which separated it from the shop—then quietly seated himself, with the air of a man who expected some important communication.

"I never visit," he replied, after Meeran had explained to him the danger of Ellen, and the nature of her illness; "it is against my custom."

"What sum will tempt you?" demanded the youth, indignantly.

"Scarcely any," was the reply.

This, as the young Indian afterwards discovered, was merely said to enhance the value of his services. At his repeated entreaty the old man at last consented to name a sum.

"It shall be doubled," exclaimed his visitor, joyfully, "provided that I may rely on your silence and discretion."

"Discretion!" repeated the man of science, with a chuckle—for the prospect of gain made him jocose—"the grave is far less likely to disclose a secret than I am! Means have been found to extort a confession from mouldering bones—even from the earth to which the flesh has been converted; but not from me; my secrets are locked here—here, in my brain! I never trust them to my heart—for the heart is flesh, and therefore weak!"

He struck his withered hand upon his forehead as he spoke.

"But this is unnecessary," he continued; "you know that you may trust me; else you had not sought me."

"And how should I be assured of that?" demanded the young man, struck by the singularity of his manner, and his mode of expressing himself.

"He sees that I am with you," said the

colonel; "Guyot and I are old acquaintances—are we not, old mummy?"

"Since you are pleased to recognise me, Colonel Mowbray," replied the old man, with mock humility, "we are old acquaintances—so old, that I almost forgot when first we met!"

Up to the moment he uttered the words, the speaker had not betrayed, either by look or tone, that he had ever encountered either of his visitors before. The proof was enough—Meeran was at once convinced that he might trust him.

"I will but give directions to my boy," said the doctor, "and provide myself with some necessary drugs; I will then attend you. I presume," he added, "you have a carriage near—I am not fond of walking?"

Both the gentlemen assured him that they had.

The singular man—singular both in his person and his professional pursuits—left the little chamber in which they had been closeted, and gave directions to his apprentice—for such the lad in the shop was—respecting the answer he should give to any inquirers, and then disappeared through a second door. In about half an hour he returned, fully equipped for his journey: he was accompanied by a person closely muffled in a cloak, whom he conducted to the door of his shop, and then dismissed.

"A patient?" observed the colonel carelessly.

"No—a pupil," replied the old man, "who is possessed of the singular desire of treating one disease—and one alone."

"His name?" asked Meeran.

"I do not know it."

"His country, then?"

"I am still less acquainted with it," replied the singular personage; "his knowledge is as varied as the tongues he converses in; he has studied in many lands, and possesses something of the wisdom of all. Were I to venture a guess, I should judge him to be from—"

"The East!" interrupted Meeran, bitterly; who fancied that he had recognised, in the person of the doctor's mysterious pupil, his former friend and preceptor, the Khan.

"No," replied Guyot, without moving a muscle or expressing the least surprise; "from Italy; his genius, like his person, bears all the characteristics of the race who first imposed the yoke of conquest, and then the one of superstition, on the world. Yes, yes!" he added, thoughtfully, as if debating within himself; "he must be from Italy!"

There the subject dropped; Meeran either was, or affected to be, convinced: the interest he felt in discovering some clue to the intentions of his former friend, were absorbed in the danger of Ellen; added to which, the oath of the Khan reassured him.

CHAPTER V.

Friendship hath angel eyes, and watcheth o'er
The safety of the absent and the loved.
Friendship is proved the truest shield of life:
Blunting its darts, turning its ills aside.

ISABEL.

THE morning after the scene in the library of Carrow Abbey, Joe Beans and the lawyer started for London; but not without giving repeated directions to Chettleborough to keep a sharp look out touching the safety of his harmless charge: not that the old sexton needed any additional caution, for he had become so attached to the poor lunatic, that the care he bestowed upon him was rather the result of affection than the service of a hireling. The old groom was the constant companion of his labors in the churchyard, of his solitary hours at night, in the lone cottage—where Martin would sit, patiently watching his guardian, as he played upon the bells.

Joe's first step on reaching the metropolis was to call at the house of Colonel Mowbray, in St. James's, to inquire after his sweetheart Susan. The tall, powdered footman who opened the door, eyed his rustic garb with that supercilious air of contempt which characterises flunkeyism in its intercourse with the humble, even more fully than its cringing servility marks its contact with the great.

"Su-u-san!" deliberately drawled out the fellow, as he counted the large pearl buttons on Joe's shooting jacket; "I think we had such a young per-er-son in our estab-
ment, but she is go-n-ne."

"Gone!" repeated her lover.

"Ye-es—with her young lady, Miss De Vere."

"Where?" demanded Joe, impatiently.

"Can't say."

The powdered rascal had received his instructions from her ladyship—whose own gentleman he considered himself—and was about to close the door in the face of the honest rustic, when the latter unceremoniously pushed it back, and entered the hall; he was not to be put off so easily.

"What do you mean?" demanded the astonished lackey.

By way of illustrating his intentions, the unwelcome visitor seated himself in the porter's great chair, which happened to be unoccupied at the moment. Deliberately stretching out his legs, and imitating the affected, drawing tone of the speaker, he made answer:

"Re-e-main here till I se-e the young person whom I came to see-e!"

"But you ca-n't—she is gone!"

"Where?"

"Don't know."

"Don't believe a word of it!" replied the rustic.

"What!" exclaimed the indignant flunkey, astonished that his veracity should be doubted; "do you suppose me capable of—"

"Anything," interrupted Joe; "lying, I am certain, comes more easily to you than your prayers; true, you have greater prac-

tice: like most of your tribe, you have caught the vices of your betters—their manners you only imitate!"

"Impertinence!" drawled the footman.

"That's the London name for truth, I suppose!" drily observed the lover of the pretty Susan.

"Go!"

"When I have seen the person I came to see!"

The pampered menial at last began to lose all patience, and, calling two or three of his fellow servants into the hall, they threatened to eject the intruder by force.

At the word "force" Joe sprang from his seat, and, grasping the tough ash stick—his constant companion, and which he facetiously called his "persuader"—firmly in his hand, dared them to attempt it.

The liveried herd drew back irresolute: they did not like the expression in the eyes of their visitor; still less did they admire the stout cudgel in his grasp.

"Send for an officer!" said the coachman.

"It's my opinion," observed the butler, "that the fellow only wants to steal the plate!"

The words had scarcely escaped his lips, when the stick of the insulted youth descended with fearful rapidity upon the skull of the speaker, which it must have broken, had not nature, with a mother's prudent foresight, made it of more than ordinary thickness. It is wonderfully beautiful to observe how she adapts her works to the ends for which they are created.

The confusion and noise brought Lady Mowbray from the library into the hall. At the first glance she recognized the countenance of honest Joe, and guessed all that had occurred. Her plans were laid in an instant—for she was a woman of tact.

"What is the meaning of this disturbance?" she inquired.

Each party was eager to explain: the servants pleaded their mistress's orders,—Joe, his determination not to quit the house without seeing Susan, and how the butler had more than insinuated—had asserted—that he came with the design to rob the house.

"Ridiculous!" said her ladyship, with a good humoured smile, "to suppose for an instant that one whom my esteemed friend Dr. Orme places so much confidence in could entertain such an intention! Susan has accompanied her young lady on a visit to a relative a few miles from town, or of course you should be permitted to see her. Go into the servants' hall," she added, "and take some refreshment, whilst I write a note to my niece, of which you shall be the bearer."

All this was so naturally uttered, that the poor fellow could not suspect the least treachery was concealed under such apparent kindness. Thanking lady Mowbray for her great condescension, the faithful fellow followed his conductor to the servants' hall: the butler, who was the least satisfied of the party, lingered behind.

"James," said his mistress.

"Yes, my lady," sullenly answered the man, who felt little inclined to do the honours of the servants' hall to his assailant.

"Go instantly," said the artful woman, "to the police office, and, whilst this insolent ruffian is sitting below, procure a warrant for the assault, and return as quickly as possible with the proper persons to execute it."

"I will, my lady," exclaimed the fellow, with alacrity.

"And if you really think, James," continued Lady Mowbray "of course not otherwise, that this rude young man really had the intention of robbing the house, you had better state it before the magistrate."

"I'll swear to it, my lady," replied the fellow, with a grin of satisfaction; then, with sudden recollection, he added: "suppose he should call upon your ladyship for a character?"

"On me," replied his mistress, with a bitter look; "neither the colonel nor myself know anything about him. Stay," she continued, as the butler was leaving the hall; "you may have some fees to pay for the warrant, and it would be hardly just for the expense to be all on you!"

"No more it would, my lady."

She dropped her purse into the extended hand of the ready instrument of her scheme for ridding herself of the embarrassing presence of poor Joe.

"Thank you, my lady!"

"You need not mind the change," she added.

These last words were whispered in a tone which conveyed to the wretch—who was quick of apprehension where his interests were concerned—the nature of the service expected from him. The touch of the gold, joined to the smart of the blow he had received, made him ready to swear to anything that might compromise his assailant.

Before leaving the house for the police office, he called for the footman, whose dignity had been so offended by the manner in which Joe Beans had mimicked him, and whispered something in his ear.

"I'll do it!" said the flunkie, with a knowing wink—and he immediately returned to the servants' hall, where the unsuspecting youth was waiting for the letter from Lady Mowbray.

Fortunately for him, his good looks and merry humour made a favorable impression upon the susceptible heart of the cook, who admired his curly hair, width of shoulders, and manly frame. For the last four years she had indulged in dreams of settling in the country—she began to tire of service; and, having saved a matter of three hundred pounds, thought it was high time to abdicate her empire over the boiled and the roast.

Joe had not been introduced to her more than a quarter of an hour before he felt convinced that he would make an admirable landlord for some village inn; as for a landlady, she had never seen any one, in

her own opinion, more calculated for such an important position than herself.

Joe, although a rustic, possessed great natural tact: he knew, if not by experience, at least by instinct, that in warfare there is nothing like having a friend in the enemy's camp. He ogled, sighed, and returned the coquettish glances of the fat and fair *cordon bleu* with interest, to the dreadful annoyance of the tall, aristocratic footman, who fancied that he had long since secured an interest in that quarter.

His rage, however, did not prevent his remembering and executing the directions of the butler—which he accomplished by quietly slipping a silver spoon, with the Mowbray crest, into the pocket of his rival's shooting jacket, as he passed behind his chair.

The moment he had accomplished this dexterous *coup de main*, there was a loud knocking at the street door: it was the butler, returned with the officers. With a smile of malice at the anticipated humiliation of his presumed rival, the fellow left the room.

"Feel in your pocket," said the cook—who had noticed the action of her fellow-servant.

The young fellow did so, and drew forth the spoon. He was about to protest, in indignant terms, his ignorance how it came there, when the woman interrupted him with a good-humoured smile.

"Not a word," she said, "I know it! Quick, give it to me."

He passed it to her, and squeezed her fat hand as she received it from him, in token of his gratitude; he would even ventured upon a kiss—but she quietly repulsed him.

"No time to lose!" she whispered—for the approaching footsteps warned her that the butler and footman were returning; and with a presence of mind worthy of a *soubrette* of Molière, she dropped the piece of plate into the pocket of a livery coat which was hanging in the room.

The next instant the servants, accompanied by the officers, made their appearance. The latter arrested Joe upon a charge of assault only—nothing as yet had been said about the robbery.

Great was the indignation of the cook—she had serious thoughts of attempting a rescue; but, judging that her efforts would be useless, she did, woman-like, what she considered the next best thing—began to scold. She felt confident that he was an honest youth—his enemies were cowardly wretches—he had been invited by her ladyship into the house, and it was a burning shame, &c., &c.

These severe observations were followed by a string of expletives still more expressive; but, as the blow could not be denied, the object for whom she felt such sudden and tender interest was marched off to give an account of himself at the police office.

The butler and footman remained; the former began to count the plate in the basket and on the table.

"The rascal!" exclaimed, with well af-

fected indignation ; "as I suspected—a spoon missing!"

"We-e had better *foller to the perlise office!*" affectedly drawled his fellow servant, at the same time taking down his livery coat from the peg.

It now became the cook's turn to smile.

"Sorry for your disappointment!" continued the scamp, darting a reproachful look at the too susceptible maiden as he left the room.

"More than I aii for yours!" muttered the indignant girl. "There is one consolation—the rascal will be disappointed in his design! Mercy on us!" she added, "if it wasn't his own coat that I put the spoon into! I neither like him nor his mistress, and wish I was out of the family: it is time that I had a home of my own!"

Whether the sigh—something between the puffing of a seal and the wheeze of a pair of bellows—which followed, had reference to Joe, or to the longing she experienced for a home, I must leave our readers to surmise; certain, the cook's idea of a home were not confined to a house alone—there was a husband in the perspective; and that very day she resolved on the purchase of a cap, with bright, cherry-coloured ribbons, which had attracted her attention the previous week; but which, strong as had been the temptation, from motives of economy she had declined.

After such an instance of strength of mind, we may conclude that she was no ordinary woman: cherry-coloured ribbons became her—for, as the tall footman used to observe :

"They contwasted beautee-fully with the colour in her chweak!"

CHAPTER VI.

Between the two she stands: as life
Were loth to lose her—death to win her,
Most impatient.

OLD PLAY.

WHEN Meean Hafaz, accompanied by Colonel Mowbray and Dr. Guyot, arrived at Mortlake, they found poor Ellen a prey to a delirious fever. The ayah was seated at a short distance from the bed, watching with intense anxiety the countenance of her victim. Several times she had approached, with endearing words, to raise her heavy head, or hold the cup to her burning lips; but on each occasion had been driven back by the loud shrieks of her foster-child—who, clinging to Susan with frantic terror, begged of her, in piteous accents, to protect her from the cruel Zara.

"She will murder me!" she exclaimed, "as she has murdered my dear, kind uncle and poor Henry! Well, well!" she added; "better to die than suffer as I suffer! We may be happy in the grave—Meean cannot reach us there!"

Then she would extend her hand, and offer, in piteous accents, to drink the poison which she was fully persuaded the ayah had mixed for her.

The Indian woman turned aside; more

deeply wounded by the abhorrence which Ellen expressed than she would acknowledge even to herself. On one occasion Susan thought she saw her wife aside a tear; if so, it was but a momentary weakness—one of those sudden ebullitions of feeling which, despite our resolution and the case-hardening lessons of the world, will at times remind us we are human. The next instant her countenance resumed its usual immovable expression, as she seated herself, as we have described, at a distance from the bed, counting the heavy moments till the return of Meean Hafaz with assistance.

For some minutes Dr. Guyot stood at the threshold of the apartment, silently making himself master of the situation, as he termed it. Before he approached the couch of his patient, he motioned to his companions to retire.

"But you do not know—" whispered the young Indian.

"I know everything," interrupted the man of science, in the same under-tone; "the young lady has received a shock, the repetition of which must prove fatal; and that shock," he added, "was caused by the sight of you! Her life hangs upon a thread so fine and delicate, that a breath, a sigh, would almost sunder it!"

Without word of remonstrance, Meean and the colonel descended to the drawing-room. The mind of the former resembled a volcano after an eruption—it was exhausted by the overflow of its ungovernable passions. With a deep sigh, he threw himself upon the sofa, and something like a prayer trembled on his scornful lips, when he recalled Ellen—the companion of his childhood, the object of his boyhood's love—suffering—mad—perhaps dying. He felt for the moment that there was something even more terrible than losing her—the reproach of having destroyed her.

All was not earth in his fierce nature yet.

"You are sad!" calmly observed the colonel.

"Sad!" repeated the young man, starting to his feet, and beginning to pace the apartment; "by heavens, man, it requires the presence of a heartless thing like thee to reconcile me to myself—to convince me that there is an abyss of degradation into which I have not yet fallen!"

"And who led me to its brink?" demanded his confederate, stung by the tone of bitter contempt in which the reproof was uttered; "who, when like some giddy traveler, I stood tottering upon its verge, hurled me down? I may deserve reproach," he added, "but not from your lips!"

"You are right!" replied Meean, mournfully; "I have lost the right even, of despising you!"

As he spoke, the warrener entered the room, with a bold, swaggering air. His partnership in crime made him, in his own imagination, the equal of the man who had employed him. The heart and brain of the young Indian resembled those heavy, soli-



tary clouds which sometimes disfigure the summer sky, charged with electric thunder—black as the veil of night with the impending storm—requiring only a conductor to discharge their fury. The appearance of the warrener proved that conductor. As the ruffian was confidently advancing towards the spot where Meeran was standing, the concentrated rage in the heart of the young man broke forth with fearful violence.

"Wretch!" he exclaimed; "brutal, vile, senseless, and loathsome as the thing made in man's image, in scorn of his humanity—to mock his pride, by showing him how fine the link between him and the beast, when reason abdicates her throne, and passion grasps the empire of the mind!"

"What have I done?" demanded the wretch, in a sulky tone, "more than yourself?"—for community in evil made him bold. "I like the girl, and only wanted to terrify her into better humour!"

With a laugh which might have rivalled the hyena's savage cry, as it darts from its secret ambush on its victim, Meeran sprang upon him; the nerves and muscles of his slender limbs seemed formed of tempered steel.

Without any apparent effort, he raised the huge frame of the warrener from the ground, till it was on a level with his head, then hurled him to the extreme end of the room.

Will Sideler, as we have shown, had always been of a revengeful nature. He rose in an instant, and, shaking himself like a shaggy hound, rushed upon his assailant.

Twice the attack was repeated, and with the same result; the third time the brutal ruffian lay, his strength exhausted, bruised, bleeding, and subdued, at the extreme end of the room.

Meeran stood calmly regarding him—not a pulse beat quicker: the contest had dispersed the gathered tempest of his soul, but left his nerves unshaken.

"Is the fellow dead?" demanded the colonel.

A low groan from the warrener assured him that he was not.

"Humph!" continued the heartless man of the world; "only bruised and maimed! You have acted unwisely," he added, lowering his tone; "it is far better to destroy the instrument for which we have no further use than to abuse it!"

"What should I fear?" demanded the young man, scornfully.

"Nothing—of course, nothing!" replied his friend; "you know best! I merely expressed an opinion; but I have known a discarded dog to bite its former master!"

"Then, as if the fate of the wretch was no affair of his, he opened one of the windows of the drawing-room, stepped out, and strolled to a distance on the lawn.

A prudent man—a very prudent man—was Colonel Mowbray: he neither wished to hear nor see anything which might ultimately compromise either his friend or himself.

"Rise!" said Meeran to the warrener, as soon as they were alone.

Twice did the bruised and half-stunned wretch endeavor to raise himself upon his feet, but without success; at each effort he staggered and fell, and remained crouching, like a maimed beast of prey, gazing with bloodshot, terror-stricken eyes upon the hunter.

"I can't!" he murmured.

Although the young Indian shuddered at the contact, he extended his hand to assist him to a chair. As soon as the wounded man was seated, he groaned heavily.

"Your insolence has merited death," observed Meeran, mildly; "for it has nearly caused the death of one, to spare whose heart one sigh, whose eyes one tear, I would have sacrificed a thousand lives like thine!"

"Anything but your own passions!" mentally thought the warrener; but prudence kept him silent.

"Few," continued the speaker, "have ever escaped my hand when it has been raised to strike: thou art one of those few; but beware how you offend again—I spare not twice! This girl—this attendant upon Miss De Vere"—he could not bring himself to profane the name of Ellen by pronouncing it to such a being—"offend her but with one word—insult her only by a look—and I will trample thy hideous soul from thy yet more hideous carcase. You know me," he added, "and are warned!"

The cold, passionless tone in which the menace was uttered made it far more terrible than if pronounced in the ebullition of passion.

Will Sideler shuddered as he listened to it: for once he had found his master.

Meeran needed not his assurance of obedience—the subdued look of the ruffian convinced him that the lesson he had given him would not be thrown away; added to which, experience taught him that no animal is more submissive than a cur thoroughly broken by the lash.

Dr. Guyot made his appearance in the drawing-room. At the sight of the withered old Frenchman, the young Indian forgot everything but Ellen, and the danger which threatened to remove her from his power.

"What hope?" he demanded, grasping the hand of the man of science with such nervous eagerness that he winced beneath the pressure.

"But slight," replied the doctor; "three conditions are necessary to save her."

"Name them?"

"The first is silence the most profound."

"Not a breath shall ruffle the rose-leaf at her casement window!" exclaimed Meeran; "the tomb pyramids of Egypt shall not be more silent! I will watch over the mansion: all shall be still as if the wing of the angel of death rested over it!"

"It does rest over it!" observed the Frenchman, seriously. "The next condition is, that neither yourself, Colonel Mowbray, nor the dark woman who calls her her foster-child, pass the threshold of her chamber."

Meeran looked at him doubtfully.

"The fever is of the nerves and brain," continued the speaker, in the same cold, professional tone ; "a second shock must prove fatal to her. But do not let my words influence you," he added ; "I have no interest in her recovery, since my fees will be the same whether she lives or dies!"

The young man turned away from him with disgust, and impatiently muttered :

"The last condition, sir—the last?"

"Light must be carefully excluded from her chamber: the eye is the window of the brain—it must be closed; all impression from external objects carefully excluded from the o'erladen mind."

"And how long is this to last?" inquired the young man.

"About ten days," replied the physician.

"And in that time ——"

"The patient will be either past all danger, or ready for the grave."

A cold shudder ran through the veins of Meeran Hafaz as he listened to the response, which was pronounced with the heartless tone of an oracle—in fact, coming from such lips, it might almost be deemed as the response of fate—for Dr. Guyot was one of those remarkable men to whom science had as few secrets as humanity had claims; and yet, with all his wisdom, he was the slave of earth's most debasing passion—avarice: that canker of the heart which in youth chills its most generous impulses—in age becomes the engrossing passion of the soul.

Of all idols, gold most debases its worshippers.

There was a violent struggle in the heart of the young Indian before he could induce himself to promise compliance with the directions of the speaker. Resign for ten days—which appeared to him as many ages—the happiness of seeing Ellen—of pouring his prayers in her ear, offering the burning homage of his headstrong passion at her feet; but the thought, the dread of losing her prevailed, and he reluctantly yielded his assent.

A smile—so faint that it escaped the glance of Meeran—played for an instant on the lips of Dr. Guyot—then disappeared.

"She must hear no voice save that of her young attendant," observed the latter, "or mine."

"Be it so," said his employer; "but till the crisis is past, I shall not leave the place."

The old man merely shrugged his shoulders, to denote how indifferent the arrangement appeared to him.

"I shall at once prepare my draught," he said, as he quitted the room; "I will remain to watch its effect, and then return to London."

To all Meeran's entreaties to remain at Mortlake till the danger was past, the doctor turned a deaf ear. He proffered gold—an enormous sum—but the man of science remained unmoved: he had other patients

to attend to, he said, whose safety required his presence as much as Ellen's.

"You shall not leave here!" interrupted the young man, passionately; "what are the lives of a thousand of earth's daughters compared to hers?"

"And what shall detain me?" demanded the Frenchman, coolly.

"Force."

"My person, possibly," answered the doctor; "but not my mind, my skill, my knowledge! You rave, young man! no violence can compel me to employ the only qualities for which you desire my presence. The slightest hindrance to my free action would only be the warrant for the death of her you would preserve!"

The argument was unanswerable; even the strong will of Meeran bent to the iron law of necessity—and he reluctantly consented to the departure of the doctor, who seemed to hold in his hands the balance of life and death. After requesting the physician, at his leisure, to attend to the hurts of the warrener—who, all the time of their conversation had been suffering in silence, in the chair where the young Indian had placed him—he stepped upon the lawn to rejoin Colonel Mowbray.

"Well," said the latter, "what have you done with him?"

"With whom?"

"Will Sideler."

"Left him to the care of Dr. Guyot."

"His friend received the intelligence with a dissatisfied air: he remembered how the ruffian for years had cherished a vindictive feeling against his brother. True, the late baronet had not been bound to him by the bond of mutual guilt, and the colonel was supposed to ignore the tie which existed between him and Meeran Hafaz.

"Tell me," said the young man, whose suspicions of the Frenchman were only partially allayed; "this Guyot ——"

"Is possessed of more skill than half the College of Physicians put together. I have known him succeed a hundred times when every other hope had failed."

"It is not his skill I doubt."

"What then?"

"His fidelity," replied Meeran—who proceeded to relate the conversation which had just taken place, and the conditions which the old man had exacted.

"And you assented?" demanded the colonel.

"What could I do?"

"You acted wisely," continued the querist. As for his fidelity, as long as you gratify his avarice, I will answer for it he will not betray you; besides," he added, "none know of Ellen's illness—at least none who are likely to feel an interest in the result; the few servants who are aware of her being here are devoted, body and soul, to your will: there is no fear."

Meeran endeavoured to persuade himself that such was really the case; but, like most natives of the East, he was naturally of a suspicious nature, and more than once he regretted the promise which the

fear of Ellen's illness had extorted from him.

The ayah was even more impatient at being driven from the chamber of her charge. With the inconsistency of all violent and passionate dispositions, she refused for a long time to be separated from the poor girl whose happiness she had so successfully laboured to destroy : her heart yearned to watch over her ; it was torture to her proud spirit to see her attended by another—to be made to feel that her presence was abhorrent to her foster-child—whom she still loved with the wayward, capricious affection of a nurse.

That same evening, Susan, who had descended to the servants' hall to prepare a cooling drink from some herbs which Dr. Guyot had given her, was startled by a tapping at the lofty window which looked upon the lawn at the back of the house.

"Are you alone?" demanded a childish voice.

"Yes."

"Then I'll come down," continued the speaker.

"The doors are locked," replied the poor girl, trembling with apprehension lest Zara or the warrenor should make their appearance—for as yet she knew not of the injuries which the latter had received.

"I've got a key," was the response.

In a few seconds it was heard to turn in the rusty wards of the long-disused lock, and the red-haired urchin who had been so unceremoniously treated by Sideler, crept cautiously into the room. With a broad grin upon his features, he stood for some time staring at Susan—who thought, as she recognised him by the light of the solitary lamp suspended from the ceiling, that she had never seen a being more hideous.

"I like thee," said the boy ; "else I wouldn't have come back. What beest thee here for?"

The prisoner answered only by a sigh.

"I could let 'ee out, if I loiked!"

Susan's first impulse was to accept the offer thus unexpectedly made ; but the recollection of Ellen's unfriended state prevented her.

"I cannot leave," she said.

"Why not?" demanded the lad, with an air of surprise ; "does 'ee loike the old man who wor tuzzling wi' thee yesterday?"

"Like him!" she replied, with a shudder ; oh, no ! I fear his presence more than anything on earth!"

"If I wor thee, I'd catch him!"

"What do you mean?"

"Trap him," continued the strange visitor, "as I do the birds. Cromwell House be a rare old cage! I don't mind if I show 'ee how, for speaking kindly to me, and telling the old un not to beat me : they generally laugh in the village," he added, bitterly, "when any one beats or mocks me—that's why I hate un so."

Feeling that any chance, however desperate, in her present position was not to be neglected, she entreated the unearthly-looking urchin to explain himself.

"Come with me," he cried ; "I'll show 'ee!"

Passing before her, he led the way to the passage running parallel with the great hall—which passage it was necessary to traverse in order to pass from the servants' rooms to the great staircase ; originally there were two staircases—but the one leading from the offices having fallen into decay and become dangerous, had been removed. As soon as they reached the spot, her conductor, with a grin which rendered his features yet more hideous, pointed to the floor.

"What mean you?" demanded Susan, who suspected that he was trifling with her.

"There it be!"

"What?"

"My trap—and yours, if you loike to catch un: if the old man begins to court 'ee again, and thee don't loike it, look here!"

Kneeling on the ground, as near as possible to the door, the boy pushed back a part of the moulding at the bottom of the panel-work, and discovered an iron ring—by pulling which he caused the floor to open for the space of ten or twelve feet, discovering a sort of pit or cellar, of considerable depth. Delighted with what he had done, he remained staring at Susan, grinning and nodding all the while.

The sharp-witted girl saw in an instant the advantage to be derived from the discovery : it enabled her to place a barrier between the apartments of Ellen and the lower part of the house, where the warrenor and the ayah were banished. She thanked the poor grateful little fellow, and, drawing forth her purse, proffered him a piece of gold. The boy looked disappointed, and refused it somewhat sullenly ; Susan repeatedly urged him to accept it.

"I woant!" he muttered.

"But why not?"

"Because it were not for money that I showed it."

"For what then?" demanded the girl, with an air of surprise.

"For the koind word and look you gave me, when the old man wor so hard upon I," replied the lad. "I thought I could be of use to 'ee, and so I comed back ; and I'll come again," he added, "if you want me."

Susan gave him her hand, which he shook heartily, at the same time observing that it wor better nor money.

A step was heard in the hall : he hastily closed the trap and motioned to her to fly.

"And you?" she whispered.

"I know a dozen ways to be off without their catching me ; for the matter of that, twenty or more. This be a queer old place : I can come in and go out as I loike, and nobody the wiser."

So saying, he crept along the passage, and disappeared under a small recess beneath the great staircase. Susan retraced her steps rapidly to the servants' room. When she reached it, the ayah was already there : the woman regarded her suspiciously.

"Where have you been?" she demanded.

Susan hesitated.

" You need not answer me," she continued ; " I will spare you the trouble of hatching a lie, which could not deceive me : you have been trying to escape ! "

" And what if I have ?" replied the poor girl, secretly rejoiced that her suspicions extended no further ; " the treatment I have received here has not been such that I feel very anxious to remain."

So saying, she removed the herbs which had been simmering on the fire, and returned to the chamber of her young mistress.

Zara's suspicions were not so easily allayed as Susan imagined. After looking carefully round her, she left the apartment, determined to make a personal inspection of the house—to leave no room unexplored except the chamber of Ellen.

With a light step, she glided along the corridors ; visited alternately the long-deserted drawing-rooms, the sleeping chamber and the oaken gallery—called the council-chamber of Cromwell : not a sound fell upon her attentive ear. Just as she was on the point of returning, a slight rustling near one of the windows which opened on the roof startled her ; as she gently drew aside the casement, and peered forth, a countenance encountered hers so closely, that they almost met : it was that of the cow-boy, who was so terrified by the oriental style of head-dress and swarthy features of the ayah, that he mistook her for one of the ghosts he had so often heard of.

With a yell of terror, he rolled along the roof, and, but for the parapet, must have fallen over, screaming :

" The ghost ! the ghost !"

Zara descended to invoke the aid of Meeran : when they returned, the boy had disappeared ; it was some days before he ventured to approach the house again.

CHAPTER VII.

Justice is lame as well as blind amongst us.
OTWAY.

WHEN Joe found himself at the police-office, his first care was to despatch a messenger to Lawyer Elworthy, confident that the clear-headed old man would be much better able to deal with any charge which his enemies might bring against him than he himself could hope to be. It was the first time in his life he had ever been taken before a magistrate, and he naturally betrayed that dread which the uncharitable take as an indication of guilt—the more fair as a proof of innocence.

" Humpf ! " muttered an old officer, as poor Joe, after an hour's detention, was conducted before his worship ; " an old offender ! "

The speaker had been drinking at a neighboring public-house with the butler and the footman.

" Did you ever see me before ?" demanded Joe, who perceived that the magistrate had noticed the expression, and that the effect was unfavorable.

The man shook his head : he did not venture to assert positively that he had, although he felt an inclination to do so ; but the shake of that grey head conveyed to his worship more even than a response in the affirmative would have done.

The prisoner naturally felt indignant, and repeated his question, with the same result.

" Speak Simmonds ! " said the magistrate.

" Vy, your varship," deliberately answered the officer, " perhaps I should not exactly like to swear to it—these gentry do disguise themselves so *very* cleverly : sometimes they dress as parsons, sometimes as countrymen ; it was a *feller* in a welweteen jacket like that, who robbed Lady Dacre of her diamonds, in the Green Park—not that I mean positively to say it was the same.

" You had better not ! " muttered Joe, significantly.

" Proceed with the charge," said the magistrate, gravely.

The footman mounted into the witness-box, and, being duly sworn, stated—that the prisoner called at the house of Colonel Mowbray, under pretence of seeing a young woman who had lately resided there ; that, suspecting his intentions, he had tried to dismiss him—but the *feller* refused to leave ; that, despite his remonstrances, he had forced his way into the hall, and committed the assault complained of upon the butler.

The butler next displayed his broken head, and added that, since the departure of the prisoner, he had examined the plate-basket, and missed a spoon.

" Ah ! ah ! " said the magistrate ; " robbery as well as assault ! Let him be searched ! "

Poor Joe's person was immediately turned inside out by the officers : nothing, however, was found upon him except a well-filled purse and the letter he had received from Susan : it was read by the clerk. It ran thus :

" Now is the time to come—ask for me—say you come from the country ; the servants are very stupid and conceited, especially the footman ; they will not suspect anything ; her ladyship, I fear, begins to look coolly upon me. Your affectionate
SUSAN."

" A regular plant ! " muttered the old officer.

" Evidently an accomplice ! " observed the justice ; " has his cell been searched ? "

One of the attendants replied in the affirmative, and added, that nothing had been found.

The butler glanced reproachfully at the tall footman, who began to look excessively puzzled at the result.

At this state of the proceedings, fortunately for Joe, Mr. Elworthy made his appearance. The worthy lawyer proceeded at once to the bench, shook hands with the magistrate, and then nodded familiarly to the prisoner. At the sight of the man o'

law, the butler was observed to turn very pale.

"Bless me!" exclaimed the justice; "are you acquainted with the prisoner?"

"Perfectly well," replied Mr. Elworthy; "he is a friend of mine."

"A friend!"

Such a declaration from a person of the lawyer's well-known respectability produced an evident impression in favor of the accused; even the old officer began to think that he had judged a little too hastily.

"He is charged with an assault!"

"Possibly!"

"And suspected," continued the magistrate, "of a design to rob the house of Colonel Mowbray."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Mr. Elworthy, emphatically; it is not more than four-and-twenty hours since he left Norfolk, by my advice and request; we travelled together. I was perfectly aware of his intended visit to Colonel Mowbray's, and can answer that his intentions were not only honest but praiseworthy. Such an accusation is most preposterous, unless," he added, smilingly, "you suspect me of being an accomplice!"

Such an idea of course was not to be entertained for an instant. The charge of intended robbery was therefore at once dismissed, and nothing then remained to be disposed of but the assault, to establish which the butler was called into the witness-box: he mounted most reluctantly—all his effrontery seemed suddenly to have deserted him, and he studied as much as possible to turn his face from the bench.

The lawyer eyed him for a few moments, with an air which betrayed a confused recollection. Suddenly he turned to the magistrate, and whispered a few words in his ear.

"Are you certain?" said he.

"Most certain," continued Joe's friend; "question him."

The justice remained silent, however, till he had made his deposition. He then asked of Joe what he had to say in answer to the charge.

"I cannot deny it," replied the young man, modestly, but firmly. "I called to see a good and virtuous girl, to whom—" Here he hesitated, but an encouraging smile from Mr. Elworthy urged him to proceed.

"Speak out!" exclaimed the clerk.

"To whom," continued Joe, "I am engaged to be married: there be no harm in that. I was accused of an intention of robbing the house—ordered to quit it like a dog—and so I—I did give him a tap, just to remind the fellow that civility was due to every one. If he bears any malice," he added, "and your worship will see fair play, I'll have it out with him Norfolk fashion. I bear no malice."

We need not inform our readers that Joe's offer was not entertained for an instant: it was contrary to the practice of the court.

"Mr. Beans," said the magistrate, sup-

pressing a smile, with some difficulty: "you are fined forty shillings to our lord, the king, and discharged."

The money was handed to the clerk, and the prisoner told by one of the officers that he might leave the dock. The instant he was released, he advanced to the table, and begged to know if he might speak a few words.

"Certainly!" was the reply.

"It is only to inform that pale-faced rascal, who stands as if he could not look an honest man in the face, where he may find the spoon whose loss he complained of.

"Dear me!" said the magistrate, "do you know anything about it?"

"Yes, your worship!"

"Where is it?"

"In the footman's pocket," replied Joe, who recognized the livery coat, and proceeded to relate how the kind-hearted cook had witnessed the rascally attempt to criminate him, and the manner in which it had been transferred from his possession to that of the crest-fallen servant, who looked as if he meditated an escape. The butler was already skulking out of the witness-box.

The footman was searched, and, to his confusion, the spoon produced from his pocket.

"I have acted more honestly to you," said Joe, "than you would have done to me. I have explained to his worship how it came there!"

"And I can prove it!" exclaimed a female voice from the crowd.

"Silence in court, there!" exclaimed the red-nosed officer.

"I won't!" replied this same voice; "I am a witness—justice is justice! The young man is nothing to me—of course not—but I'll speak the truth. It's not often that I make up my mind to anything, but when I do, I'd like to see any one that could stop me!"

The cook, her countenance flushed with anger, hustled her way to the table through the crowd, and, without waiting to be sworn, began, with that amiable volubility so peculiar to her sex and profession, to relate everything that had taken place in the servants' hall; adding, "that she was ready to take her oath to Joe's honesty." In confirmation of which, she seized the book, which the clerk had been vainly tendering, and kissed it with a smack which proved the heartiness of her testimony, if not its truth.

"Your worship," said the tall footman, in a mincing tone, "she is *hamerous* on the young fellow, and will swear anything!"

"Will I!" replied the woman, with spirit. "At any rate I am not such a fool as to be hamerous on a pitiful, cowardly, sneaking, lickspittle cur as you are! Please sir," she said, turning towards the bench, "I never seed him till this morning, and ten to one," she added, with a sigh—for she had heard Joe's declaration respecting Susan—"after to-day, if ever I see him again."

Who would have thought that mountain of flesh concealed so much true womanly nature? but we should never judge by appearances. On the demand of Mr. Elworthy, her evidence was regularly taken down, and he declared his intention to prosecute the two servants for conspiracy and forgery.

The men saw that their scheme was defeated. The opinion of every one in court was unfavorable to them. Even the red-nosed officer, who had so condescendingly shared their drink at the public-house, began to look indignantly at them. He felt that his respectability had been compromised.

"Officers!" said the magistrate, sharply, "see that neither of those men leave the court!" Then, addressing the butler, who had been forced back into the witness-box, he asked him how long he had lived in the service of Colonel and Lady Mowbray.

The fellow replied with great volubility, and endeavored to shirk the question, by assuring his worship that he had lived only in the most distinguished families, and that, if he would send for the colonel or her ladyship, they would give him the best of characters.

"Doubtless!" drily muttered the lawyer.

The experienced man of justice was not to be so baffled: he repeated the question, and demanded a straightforward answer.

It came at last—"reluctantly as birdlime comes from furze"—but it did come at last.

"About three months."

"And who recommended you to the colonel?" continued the justice.

There was no reply.

"Shall I tell you?" added the speaker. "Perhaps it was your late master, Captain Elton?"

At the name of Captain Elton, several of the officers began to rummage amongst the papers and handbills offering rewards for goods stolen or lost, and the apprehension of various offenders. They soon came to one giving a description of the valet of the late son-in-law of Sir Jasper Pepper, charged with absconding from the hotel, on the night of his death, with a dressing-case, containing a considerable amount of cash and jewelry. The thief had been accurately described, and the reward was one hundred pounds.

The red nose of the old police officer became of a yet darker hue as he perused the document.

"Curse the fellow!" he muttered; "he has robbed me of a cool hundred! To think that I should have been drinking with him, too! There is one consolation," he thought: "he is sure to hang for his impudence!"

In the days of George III., the punishment for the crime the valet of the late Captain Elton had committed was nothing less than death. No wonder, then, that he turned pale when he first recognised Lawyer Elworthy upon the bench: something whispered him that he was betrayed.

"This is a mistake!" replied the terrified wretch.

"That you must prove upon your trial," blandly observed the magistrate; "the laws are very humane, and afford every facility to a criminal to clear himself—if he can!"

"Send for my master!"

"He can speak to your character, if you wish it, on your trial, my good man."

"I am sure he will bail me!"

His worship in the same mild tone, gently reminded him that it was out of his power to accept bail for a capital offence; but added, that he would remand him, if he particularly wished it.

It is curious to observe, that the instant a man is charged with any crime affecting his life, with what extreme courtesy the magistrates, judges, and even the goalers, treat him; he becomes an object of personal interest; is surrounded by the most delicate attentions; sheriffs, chaplains, and turnkeys address him in the blandest tones. When Claude du Val, the dashing highwayman, was sentenced to execution, he declared that he had lost all hope of life, from the politeness of those around him.

Despite his entreaties the justice decided on remanding him, in order to give time to complete the evidence against him; and the tall footman shared his fate, on a charge of conspiracy, Joe being bound over to appear against him on a future day.

As the honest fellow left the office, accompanied by Mr. Elworthy, they encountered the cook, who looked rather reproachfully at the hero of the day; it was not his fault that her dreams of the roadside inn and handsome landlord had been so suddenly dissipated.

Joe pressed her fat red hand in his, and warmly thanked her.

"I have only acted like an honest girl," she said; "and you owe me no gratitude. I shall lose my place through it," she added, "no doubt, but that is no great matter: I can live without serving any one."

"Should that prove the case," observed the lawyer, "you have only to apply to me—I will provide you with a home."

Her heart was too full to thank him. True, she had only seen Joe for an hour; but that hour had melted her susceptible heart—although a cook, she had both feelings and a conscience.

"Have you learnt anything?" inquired Mr. Elworthy of his companion.

"Alas, nothing!"

"I," replied the woman, "can tell you what, perhaps, you will be glad to know: if, as I suppose, your inquiries are for the colonel's niece."

"They are!"

"You must seek her, then, at Mortlake!"

So saying, she turned aside, and disappeared from their gaze.

CHAPTER VIII.

Never is vice so hideous as when decked
In virtue's borrowed plumes—the virgin's blush
Upon the wanton's cheek: the words of truth
On falsehood's lips are less abhorrent.

OLD PLAY.

ALTHOUGH still weak as an infant, thanks to the skill of Doctor Kissock and the untiring watchfulness of his friends, Walter Mowbray was slowly progressing towards convalescence—all immediate danger was past: youth and a naturally good constitution had triumphed over the blow of the assassin.

The care of nursing him had been shared by Martingale, who, in order to divert all suspicion from himself, manifested an interest in the recovery of the invalid second only to that which Henry felt. In this the unprincipled man of the world had a double object in view; the first was to induce his intended victim to mingle in society, and so give occasion for the accomplishment of his design; the second, by being continually with him, to act as a spy upon his conduct, and discover the fitting moment for the next attempt, which he trusted would prove more successful than the last.

With all his cunning, however, he could not make out the cause of our hero's early departure from the Palazzo Borghese, the night of the attempted assassination, or where he had passed the intervening hours till his return to the hotel. At first he imagined he was engaged in some intrigue: closer observation induced him to dismiss the thought; for, if Henry appeared unhappy, it was only when he expected letters from England, and was disappointed by their non-arrival; or if some unfavorable symptom manifested itself in the progress of his friend.

Every morning a page in the livery of the beautiful Pauline came to the hotel to inquire after the health of the wounded Englishman. Henry invariably left the room to receive the boy, and answered his inquiries himself; and as invariably returned with a rose similar to the one which the beautiful Therese had taken from her hair and left upon the pillow of her lover, on the occasion of her visit. We have already stated how the message was answered—by sending a flower in return.

A smile of mutual intelligence would pass between the two friends, as the bearer of the token placed it in the small vase which stood by the side of the bed, and sometimes a silent pressure of the hand. Martingale had frequently noticed this, and felt annoyed by their silence upon the subject; his curiosity was piqued: it was evident there was a confidence between them which he did not share in.

"They suspect me!" he thought.

He was in error. Delicately-organized natures conceal their love with the same jealous care with which the parent bird contrives to hide its nest. They deem it profaned, if vulgar eyes once gaze upon it: secrecy adds an additional charm to the tender passion.

"Still that same pale, scentless rose!" said the unprincipled agent of Meeran, as Henry Ashton entered the chamber of Walter Mowbray, which he had only quitted a few minutes previously, to receive the daily visitor; "I positively must steal an hour to go to the library of the Vatican, and study the Persian poet, Hafaz."

"And why Hafaz?" demanded our hero.

"Because he is learned in the language of flowers," was the reply.

Although the hint was delicately enough expressed, both the young men felt annoyed by the implied desire of being admitted to a confidence which, even between themselves, existed in sympathy rather than words.

"I will spare you the trouble," observed Henry, who was the first to break the silence, which was becoming embarrassing; "the whiteness of the rose implies purity; and the absence of perfume, which may be considered as the voice of the flower, *silence, or discretion.*"

It was Martingale's turn to feel vexed; for it was impossible for him not to perceive the reproof thus allegorically conveyed.

"But come," continued the speaker; "enough of flowers; you see the excellent effect they produce upon our patient; how his eye brightens, and the colour returns to his pale cheek, when he receives them. The spell which works such wonders would lose its power, were the mystery explained. Even I," he added, "only guess the means by which it acts."

And so the subject dropped: the false friend had sufficient tact not to renew his indiscretion.

During the morning, our hero received a note from Sir Thomas Lawrence, requesting to meet him the same evening at the palace of the Duchess of Devonshire.

"I fear, Walter," he said, "that I must leave you for a few hours to the care of our mutual friend: I have received an invitation, or rather a command, which I cannot disobey."

"For the morning?" inquired Walter.

"No, unfortunately for the evening."

This was the very opportunity which Martingale wished; he professed the utmost willingness to undertake the charge—and added, that he would only step to his hotel to arrange some correspondence, and then return.

"I fear I am a sad burthen on your patience and friendship?" gratefully replied the wounded youth.

Of course the arch-deceiver assured him of the contrary, and took his leave, promising to return an hour before the time Henry Ashton was to make his visit to the duchess.

There have been few visitors to the Eternal City who do not remember the Café Greco—the rendezvous of the artists, idlers, and picturesque vagabonds of Europe—who treat the world like an oyster, which, instead of opening, as the poet hath it, with their swords, they delude into relaxing its

shells by their wits. In the rooms, beards of every cut, colour, and proportion may be seen ; from the oriental to the Henri Quatre, from the timidly cultivated exotic-looking moustache of the Englishman, aping the foreigner, to the hirsute German student.

But it must not be supposed that all the *habitués* of this well-known place of resort are of the nondescript character we have described : artists and sculptors frequently visit it in search of types or models. In the author's rather frequent visits there, he has encountered his talented countryman, Gibson, whose studio, since the death of Canova, has become one of the most celebrated in Rome ; and the illustrious Thorwaldsen, whose statue of Byron was, to the disgrace of the artistic feeling of England, permitted to remain buried in the vaults of the Custom-House, till the Master and fellows of Trinity gave it that asylum in the library of their college, which the bigotry of the Dean and Chapter of Westminster so obstinately denied.

Whatever might have been the opinions of the noble poet, there is no heresy in marble—at least that we ever heard of.

At a small table near the window were seated two young men ; one was a tall, well-made fellow, whose blue eyes, fair complexion, and light hair, indicated his Saxon origin ; his companion was one of those cosmopolite looking personages whose nationality it is much more difficult to decide. The shortness of his stature, at the first glance would have led the observer to pronounce him French ; but there was a stolidity of expression in his fish-like eyes and canary-coloured beard, so decidedly Saxon, that opinion was divided.

Both were painters—both Englishmen : the first was named Wayland—the second rejoiced in the equally poetic cognomen of Flambert. In a fit of enthusiasm they had decided on spending a month in Rome, in order to study *perfectly* the great masters. Wayland, at the end of a week, decided they were humbugs—he preferred his own style, as infinitely more true to nature—his friend pronounced them gods.

"Rely upon it," said the former, pursuing his favourite theme, "that this enthusiasm for the ancients is all a delusion—our own Reynolds beats your Titian into fits ; Gainsborough is more natural than Claude, and the Madonnas of Raphael insipid and passionless."

"Heresy!" exclaimed the little artist, rolling his eyes with enthusiasm, real, or affected ; "rank heresy in art!"

"I own my opinions are scarcely Catholic," replied Wayland with a smile ; "but tell me," he added, "what is it you find so unapproachable in Raphael except his reputation?"

The hit caused his friend to wince, for he prided himself upon his fidelity to the school of the painter of Urbino.

"His intellectuality," exclaimed Flambert ; "the ideal which we can neither rival nor imitate ; his exquisite grace. Raphael

painted with the mind—he must be judged by the mind : that creative faculty which proves that the Deity did more for man than form him in His own image—that He endowed him with a particle of His divinity."

"Ideal!" repeated Wayland, with an air of reflection ; "and pray what may you designate by the ideal?"

"Something we can all feel, but which language cannot express ; a creation of mind—a coruscation of genius—a —"

"*Basta—basta!*" exclaimed his friend ; I am about as well informed as before I asked the question. The ideal must be ponderous indeed if your words cannot define it. By Jupiter!" he added, as a tall, handsome peasant, attired in the picturesque costume of the Transtaverini entered the *café*, "there is a reality which beats your ideal! What limbs—what muscle! who ever saw a head more gracefully placed upon a pair of shoulders? Rely upon it, the choicest statues of Italy are her breathing ones!"

After looking for an instant carefully round the room, the new comer seated himself at one of the little marble tables by the door, so as to command a view of every one who entered or left. Calling for a glass of ice water, he lit a cigar, and to all appearance soon became deeply interested in the columns of the *Roman Gazette*. We say to all appearance, for the two Englishmen noticed that, at every opening or closing of the door, he cast a furtive glance at each person who entered or left."

"Watching for some one!" observed Flambert.

"You may think yourself fortunate," replied his friend, "that it is not you he is watching for!"

"Why so?"

"Because he is one of the Transtaverini," answered Wayland, who was better versed in costume than the speaker ; "he is one of the fiercest race of Rome : it provides the church with partisans, pilgrims, and fanatics—private revenge with the ready instruments of its crimes—in short, their days are passed between devotion to the Madonna and drinking in the osteria—their nights in assassination and crime. It is seldom they enter a *café* frequented by strangers" he added, "unless in pursuit of their prey. I'll sketch him!"

The recess in which the two artists were seated, was at the extreme end of the *café*. The speaker, by holding the journal which he pretended to read in his left hand, completely concealed from observation the sketch he was making with his right. He had nearly finished, when Martingale made his appearance. Rapid as was the glance which passed between the agent of Meeran Hafaz and the peasant, Wayland noticed it.

"An Englishman!" he muttered.

"What said you?" inquired Flambert.

"You see that gentleman who has just retired?"

"Yes."

"I'll bet a dinner at the Luna, that the

peasant follows him. I saw the sign of mutual intelligence as he entered."

He was right. Martingale, after taking a glass of liqueur, looked round the room with an air of disappointment, as if he had expected to meet some one, and left the place. In less than five minutes the Italian followed.

"I told you!" said Wayland.

"Shall we follow?"

"What good would it do? We have no proof—nothing beyond suspicion. Hang the fellow! I wish he had remained long enough for me to finish my drawing. I have got the head," he added, "correctly enough. The rest I must fill up from memory, or one of Prinelli's prints."

When Martingale left the *café*, he walked slowly up the Via Condotti, crossed the Piazz d'Espagna, till he reached that narrow, unfrequented part which runs between the Propaganda and the Gregorio Palace, when he began to slacken his pace, and give time for the Italian to overtake him. He had not long to wait—faithful as a bloodhound on the scent, the fellow was upon his track.

"Good morning, signor!" he said, touching the party-coloured net, in which his long black hair was drawn. "I have waited for you three days—you are come at last! What news?"

"Good—the occasion I have waited for so long and patiently, at last presents itself. The Englishman will quit his hotel this evening, at the hour of seven."

"Where for?" demanded the Transtaverrini.

"I know not," replied his employer. "You must send one who will dog his steps!"

"Nothing is more easy. Mateo is the very man, signor. He once followed a Genoese merchant from Naples to Venice, from Venice to Milan, before he found a fit occasion to strike—but he found it at last."

"See that you find it!" replied Martingale. "Your last failure nearly ruined my plans."

"By the saints and my honour, signor," exclaimed the ruffian, "the fault was none of mine! During the years I have been honoured with the confidence of my patrons in Rome, I never made such an error before. It was that cloak with the white lining," he added, with an air of vexation, "that misled me; to think that I should have been so deceived! I, that never fail to pay my devotions at the shrine of the Blessed Virgin, and make my Easter offering; it's enough to make one turn heretic!"

Let not our readers imagine that the language we have placed in the mouth of the assassin is overdrawn. During a residence of many years in Italy, we have frequently seen murderers who have taken sanctuary under the portico or in the interior of some church, whence civil justice did not dare to withdraw them. No wonder they are superstitious, and devoted to the faith from which they find, if not immunity, at least protection.

The privilege of sanctuary, so long enjoyed by the Catholic Church, had its origin in those dark and barbarous ages when every noble claimed the right of life and death over his vassals; when bishops and abbots appointed their seneschals or justiciaries, who held feudal courts in their name; when the mailed hand was stronger than the arm of justice. In such a state of society, the sanctuary was too frequently the last refuge of outraged humanity. Violence paused before the barrier which superstition had consecrated. Like all earthly institutions, the sanctuary had its abuses; and these, unfortunately, have survived its once legitimate benefits. In England, we have seen the queen of Edward IV. reduced to take refuge, more than once, at Westminster—so long considered as the most sacred of these asylums—where she gave life to the unhappy Edward V., whose younger brother, the Duke of York, was weakly given up by his terrified mother, from the same place, to his crafty uncle, Gloucester, who sent him to the Tower, which, we need not add, he never left with life.

On separating from the Italian, Martingale retired to his hotel; his confederate—the clerk at the post-office—had given him another letter which he had suppressed from our hero, and he sat down to forge the reply. It was from the worthy rector of Carrow, who announced his intention—inconvenient as it would be—to start at once for Italy, unless he heard from him. The presence of such a friend in Rome, directly after the meditated assassination, was likely to be anything but favorable to his views.

"Oh, poverty—poverty!" he exclaimed, as he seated himself at his desk; "what terrible expedients dost thou not drive men to! Had I been born rich, I should have been honest! Honesty is a gem," he added, "too rich for a poor man's keeping!"

Having finished his letter, he returned once more to the hotel of his two friends. Evil as was his nature, it was not without a pang that he saw our hero, as the clock struck seven, depart on his promised visit. He never expected to see him again in life.

CHAPTER IX.

Treacherous villains stab men in the dark.
SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN Henry Ashton arrived at the Duchess of Devonshire's, he was informed that her grace would see him in her boudoir, but that for the present she was engaged with a visitor in her cabinet. Not wishing to encounter any of her fashionable friends—who were evidently expected, for the saloons were lighted—he made his way to the former apartment, where he had passed many a happy hour, listening to her animated, brilliant conversation, and her anecdotes of the society and court of Rome.

To his secret annoyance, he found the

beautiful Pauline already there. For some time past the conduct of the princess had been so marked, that he must have been blind indeed not to have perceived the impression he had made upon her ardent and susceptible heart. Apologising for his intrusion, he would have withdrawn, but, with an impatient movement of her little hand, she detained him.

"Am I so hateful to you, then?" she said.

"Hateful!" repeated the young man. "Heavens, princess! what an accusation! It is to suppose me at once senseless and ingrate. Be assured, that of all who have been honoured and distinguished by your courtesy, none entertain a more profound respect and admiration than myself."

Pauline fixed her eyes upon him with an expression which, with all his philosophy, caused his young heart to beat, and the warm blood to run with swifter impulse through his veins.

"Respect!" she said, with a deep-drawn sigh. "True—true! that is the word with which men veil indifference or heartlessness. All respect the Princess Borghese, the sister of an emperor, the wife of Rome's proudest noble; but there are none to love her!"

Henry murmured something about her husband and his friends.

"Husband!" she exclaimed; he "never loved me! I was sacrificed by my brother, to his ambition and my husband's vanity. He thought no concession too great to obtain my hand—he cared not for my heart. Hearts," she added, bitterly, "are seldom consulted in such marriages. His indifference is equalled only by my hate."

The young barbarian, as her highness had named him, was inexpressibly shocked by an avowal, which never falls from the lips of woman without degrading her. And yet he pitied her, for he had seen quite enough of the prince to know how little sympathy existed between the ill-assorted pair.

"You condemn me," she continued; "your cold nature cannot judge of mine. It has been the dream of my existence to find some being to love me—to share my thoughts and feelings; one who could sympathize with my pursuits and sentiments—whose heart would beat responsively to mine! Fate," she added, "has shown me such an one, to make my destiny more wretched! I have neither hope nor consolation!"

"You have," said our hero, in a tone of deep feeling, "that which ought to and must sustain you—self-respect—a name which belongs to history!"

"History!" repeated Pauline: "ashes! Well has its pen been said to be of iron, since its inscriptions are graved upon the tomb! I would not sacrifice one smile from those I loved, to see my name written upon the page from which happiness is excluded! Ask of your experience and your studies, how many of my sex, whom history has enshrined, have been wretched?

Truth answers, 'All ;' misery has been the price of their immortality!"

"True!" replied our hero; "like the laurel, it is watered by tears—watched by sorrow and suffering!"

"And, like the laurel," added the princess, "it is barren. Give me the immortality which an instant of love confers: it outweighs an eternity of fame!"

So saying, she laid her hand, which trembled with passion, upon his arm, and, fixing her eyes upon his, as if they would peer into his very soul, she added, in a voice broken by sighs:

"Henry, I love you!"

"Recall those words, I entreat—I implore you!" exclaimed the young man, deeply moved. "Make me not so wretched as to feel that I have caused a shade of sorrow to pass between you and the joyous sun of your existence! Forget weakness of which I am unworthy; my heart is devoted to another!"

At the word "another," the beautiful Pauline became deadly pale: she had imagined that timidity and respect hitherto had made our hero blind to her advances—that she had but to declare the favorable sentiments with which she regarded him, to see him—as she had seen others—at her feet.

"Ingrate!" she murmured.

"No, not ingrate!" replied Henry, "since the avowal has made me wretched: had you demanded my life, I would have risked it freely in your service: not a danger that I would not have braved at your behest. Long ere I beheld this land of beauty and enchantment, my heart was devoted to another: it has not a pulse which does not throb for her. It was my boyhood's love—it is my manhood's hope—and will remain unbroken to the grave!"

"Forget the hasty word," answered Pauline, dashing aside a tear, "you are right—it was a foolish dream to think that I could touch a heart like yours. Forget it—forget it! Love on," she added, "with the truth and fervor of your ingenuous nature! Discard all thought of me! In the flattery of the world—its hollow, heartless mockeries, its whirlpool of folly and dissipation—I shall find oblivion; and, if in some lone hour, the thought which corrodes, the pang which rends the strings of life, should press upon me, I'll fly to that society of which fools make an idol, and deck my lips with smiles again! With smiles!" she slowly repeated; "in Italy we deck the dead with flowers: why not the living corpse with smiles?"

A light step was heard approaching the boudoir, and the next instant they heard the voice of the Duchess of Devonshire desiring her page to conduct Sir Thomas Lawrence to the boudoir.

Pauline started, with an effort, from the couch upon which she had sunk, overpowered by her feelings, and extended her hand to our hero.

"Farewell," she said; "I will not say for ever; for while you remain in Rome,

we shall be sure to meet again. But avoid me as much as possible. I cannot meet our lively friend—I am not in spirits to endure her railleries now. To-morrow," she added, "I shall be once more the gay and brilliant, and, as men judge me, the heartless Pauline Borghese!"

Henry Ashton raised the hand she frankly extended to his lips. As the door of the apartment opened, to give entrance to her grace, the princess disappeared through an opposite one leading to the conservatory.

"Well, *caro mio!*" exclaimed the duchess, seating herself upon the sofa which her friend had just quitted. "Have you lost all patience? I have been detained by stupid visitors from England. But I see that I need not apologise," she continued, archly, "you have not been alone!"

Her visitor remained silent.

"You need not blush—I shall not betray your secret!"

"I have no secret to betray, your grace," replied her visitor.

The lady raised from the sofa a handkerchief which Pauline had left.

"Hem!" she exclaimed, "no secret! Well, perhaps it is scarcely a secret now!"

As she spoke, she archly unfolded the delicate batista, and displayed a princely coronet, surmounting the imperial eagle, worked in gold in one corner of it.

"I know but one lady entitled to bear these arms," she added, "in Rome."

"Give it me—pray give it me!" replied Henry Ashton, "the name of the person you allude to might be compromised."

"Not by me," said her grace, throwing it to him; "with all her follies, I love Pauline too well. If I judge you aright, her weakness has already proved her punishment."

Our hero could only bow his acknowledgement, as he concealed the handkerchief in his bosom. He was too manly to confirm, either by look or word, the suspicion that her love had been repulsed.

"And Sir Thomas Lawrence?" he said.

"Is here to answer for himself," replied her grace, as the door of the boudoir opened, and the handsome painter made his appearance.

After paying his homage to the fair speaker, he informed Henry that he had received a summons to attend for a last sitting at the Vatican on the following morning; on which occasion, if he would hold himself in readiness to accompany him, he would present him to the Sovereign Pontiff: "your own eloquence must do the rest," he added.

"And I will present him with a powerful ally," observed the Duchess of Devonshire.

Both the gentlemen looked at her inquiringly.

"I am vain enough," she continued, "to imagine that I know the character of Pius VII. better than most persons. Although timid to a fault, he is naturally impressionable, and capable of exercising, whilst under the influence of enthusiasm of feeling, an independence which the camarilla

cannot control. Could he behold my unhappy friend, Lady Mowbray—hear from her own lips the story of her wrongs and sufferings, I doubt not he would at once pronounce the sentence which no earthly power could either cancel or recall!"

"But how," demanded Sir Thomas—who knew that ladies, unless of royal rank, were never presented to his Holiness within the precincts of the palace—"can such a presentation be accomplished?"

The Duchess smiled, and bade him be satisfied with the result, without being too curious as to the means.

The courtly artist was silent: had been long a visitor in the Eternal City to have heard the various gossiping reports touching her grace and Cardinal Gonzalvi; the latter, although powerful as a minister, never interfered in ecclesiastical affairs. The jealousy of the apostolic chamber was opposed to it. If ever he did venture, it was as in the present instance, without appearing in the transaction.

The position of the Pope is an anomalous one: infallible and despotic in theory, his power is so limited in practice by the various congregations of cardinals and ecclesiastics, to whom all matters are referred before they are laid before him, that he has little left to do but confirm their decisions.

"I have been twice to the convent of St. Therese," said Henry, doubtfully, "but have been refused to see her."

"The gate," replied his hostess, "will always be open to me! And now, farewell! I know it would be merely the mockery of a compliment to ask you to remain—your heart is with your wounded friend!"

"All," replied our hero, gallantly, "which remains not here!"

So saying, he quitted the apartment of the kind-hearted duchess, and, shortly after, the palace.

It was a glorious evening; the sun set brilliant and gorgeous, such as Claude loved to revel in; heavy masses of golden light flooded the hundred domes and spires of the Eternal City, fell on the Pincian Hill, and the monolith at its base. Henry had so long been a prisoner in the sick chamber of poor Walter, that he could not resist the temptation to ascend the terraced walks, from which one of the loveliest views in Rome is seen. Unconscious of danger, he did not perceive that his steps were followed by two men, dressed in the picturesque costume of the *Transtavcrini*.

For some minutes he remained seated on the edge of the marble fountain, in front of the Villa d'Este, better known as the French Academy, the nursery of sculptors and painters of our Gallic neighbors—an establishment which, with all its wealth, England has neither the taste nor spirit to imitate.

Whilst watching the last rays of the sun, he was startled by a loud cry, uttered in his native tongue, of

"Beware!—your life is in danger!"

The cry saved his life ; it caused him to spring on one side, and the long blade of the ruffian's stiletto glanced along his arm, instead of penetrating his heart.

"*Cospetto !*" muttered the assassin, between his teeth, preparing to rush upon him. "Baptista, remain on the other side."

Few persons were more active, or endowed with greater strength than Henry Ashton. Although unarmed, he rushed upon the ruffian, and a fearful struggle ensued. They fell upon the sward, their limbs entwined together like knotted serpents.—Vainly the man essayed to use his weapon—our hero held him firmly by the wrist, with his disengaged hand he rained a shower of blows upon his head and face. Whilst this was going on, he expected every instant to be assailed by the companion of his antagonist ; but the person whose friendly voice had given the first alarm hastened to his assistance, and the worthy Baptista, seeing that they were two to one, sprang over the parapet which guards the summit of the hill, and rapidly disappeared. The two Englishmen hastened to the succour of their countryman, by this time almost exhausted by his struggles. Taking a most unpoetical advantage of his prostrate state, Wayland—for it was the painter and his friend—dealt the assassin a blow under the ear which rendered him senseless.

"Take this knife !" exclaimed Flambert, who had prudently remained at a distance, ready to take shelter under the portico of the Academy, should danger approach his person.

"How shall I thank you ?" exclaimed our hero, rising from the ground, and shaking his preservers warmly by the hand ; "you have saved my life !"

"By saying no more about it," replied the young artist, frankly, "I am sure you would have done as much for me, or any one in a similar position. But let us see," he added, raising the head of the still senseless Transtaverini, till he brought it to the light ; "if I am not mistaken, it is not the first time I have seen this face !"

"You know him ?" said Henry.

"I think I ought. I sketched his head this morning in the Café Grecco."

"Wretched man !" continued our hero ; "had he asked me for charity, I would have given it freely ; had he succeeded in taking my life, the plunder would have availed him little. I have scarcely a ducat upon my person."

"It is not the plunder that would have rewarded him !" significantly observed his preserver.

"What mean you ?"

"His employer."

"Employer !" repeated the young man, "you do not mean that ? No—the thought is too terrible ! I never injured or offended any human being. I am comparatively a stranger in Rome—who, then, should seek my life ?"

"I cannot name him," replied Wayland ; "but ten to one I can give you the clue to find him out."

He then related the scene of the morning at the *café*—the arrival of Martingale, whom of course he did not know by name, and his evident appointment with the assassin.

"And would you know this person again ?" demanded our hero, after a few moments' reflection.

"From a thousand !" said the painter, "he had one of those faces which, once seen, we do not rarely forget !"

"His age ?"

"About five or six-and-twenty."

"And his country ?"

"England."

Henry Ashton wiped the drops of perspiration from his brow. He recollects Martingale's confusion and terror at his appearance at the hotel, the morning after the attack upon Walter Mowbray—and a vague suspicion crossed his mind. Vainly he endeavoured to chase the impression—it would return ; when he remembered the devotion he had shown to his wounded friend, he accused himself of injustice in yielding to such thoughts.

"I am ungrateful," he mentally uttered ; "such kindness and feeling as Martingale has shown ! The suspicion was monstrous ! Forgive me, friendship, that for an instant I doubted of his worth !"

"But what are we to do with this fellow ?" inquired Wayland, pointing to the ruffian, who already began to recover from the effect of the blow, and was gazing with savage fury towards them ; "we can't suffer him to escape."

It was finally arranged that they should take him with them, and deposit him at the guard-house in the Corso. Binding his arms behind him with their handkerchiefs, they began to descend the hill, Flambert leading the way to give an alarm, if any of the companions of their prisoner should be on the look-out to rescue him.

It required their united strength to force their captive along. As the painter observed, it was hard walking to the galleys—an observation at which the Italian scowled, and then smiled bitterly. He knew what Roman justice was, and how it might be bribed or baffled, better than his captors.

On reaching the Piazza del Populo, they directed their steps to the centre of three streets, so well known to travelers as the Corso. The one to the right led to the Repetta, with its motley population ; the left to the Piazza d'Espagna, with its hotels, religious establishments, and the Propaganda Fidei.

At each side of the entrance to the Corso is a small church, with a graceful portico, which produces that fine effect so much admired by architects and painters, when seen from the great monolith in the centre of the piazza.

In their progress across the square, several loungers, attracted by the sight of the captive, followed them—but not so closely as to give the least clue to their

intentions. As they approached the churches in question, they made a rush upon the two Englishmen, which enabled the prisoner to spring from their grasp and reach the columns of the portico.

A wild shout, and cry of "Sanctuary!" announced that he had succeeded.

Henry's first impulse was to follow him; but the threatening looks and mingled shouts of "heretic!" and "sacrilege!" from the crowd, which by this time had increased, deterred him. Still he resolved not to lose sight of the assassin.

"Run to the guard-house," he whispered to his new friend; "tell them that the life of an attaché of the English ambassador at Naples has been attempted."

"And you?"

"Will remain here."

"I shall not stir a step!" replied the honest painter. "Once without a witness, they would think as little of murdering you for the honor of the Madonna, or because you are an Englishman, as I should of shooting a wild cat! No; Flambert may go if he likes."

The little man, who began to feel uncomfortable at the menacing attitude of the mob, eagerly availed himself of the hint, and disappeared.

Henry and Wayland mounted the steps, not to lose sight of their late prisoner, who began to harangue the crowd, who urged them by menaces to descend.

"Stir not, for your life!" said the painter, "even though you should see their knives within an inch of your throat!"

"Why not?"

"Because it is our only chance of safety. The Church is privileged; the same sanctity which affords impunity to the murderer is our protection. To shed the blood even of a criminal who has claimed the sanctuary, would, to their superstitious thinking, be worse than taking the life of the mother who bore them, or the child who calls them father."

At this stage of the proceedings, a procession of monks was observed slowly crossing the Piazza del Populo, on their return from the burial ground. They were Capucins. At their head Henry recognised the well known features of the general of the order, the eloquent Micara; a man whose influence over the rude population of the suburbs of Rome was unbounded.—No sooner did he perceive the menacing group collected round the portico of the Church, than he advanced into the midst, and demanded, in an authoritative tone, the cause of their assembling.

A dozen voices replied to him. Some said it was *only* a poor assassin, who had escaped from some heretic Englishman.—Others accused them of profaning the church by attempting to force him from its protecting walls.

The monk looked up, and recognised our hero.

"Imprudent," he said, "what have you done?"

A few words explained to him the real state of the affair.

"Stir not!" he said; "you are safe, were a hundred knives raised against you, whilst I remain by your side." Then, raising his voice, he called some of his attendant monks about him, and prepared to address the crowd.

It was a scene worthy of a painter; the Capucin, with his long white beard, which descended almost to his knees, waving back the people from the steps of the church—the assassin in the back ground, clinging to the gates—Henry Ashton and Wayland standing over him, ready at every risk to seize him if once he quitted his hold—the whole portal lit by the torches which the monks carried in their hands, and which cast a lurid light upon the picture.

Thrice did Micara sternly warn them back, and the ruffians, whose numbers had considerably augmented, retired from the steps like some sullen wave, slowly, and hoarsely murmuring. At last the distant tramp of the guard was heard advancing along the Corso.

"We are saved!" whispered Wayland, "thanks to the good father's courage! I'll never speak ill of a monk again as long as I draw breath in Rome!"

An officer, with a detachment of about twenty men, who were accompanied by the curate of the church, now made their appearance.

The assassin looked wildly round; he knew that if he attempted to fly, the military would fire upon him; the mob, too, already began to desert him; a few of them but had certain difficulties—as the Italians call their affairs with justice—which they were not eager to unravel.

"Spare me!" he said, addressing our hero, and I will inform you of every thing."

The monk looked at him sternly.

"Point out my employer!" added the wretch.

Henry would gladly have acceded to the prayer of the man, whose manner had suddenly become as abject as it had previously been insolent and menacing. It was not the military he feared: they, he knew, would not venture to drag him from his sanctuary; in all Rome there was but one man besides the Pope who could give such an order, and that man was Micara. For years he had been supreme judge of the sacred office, and the ruffian knew it.

"Save me from him!" he shrieked, pointing to the Capucin; "I will reform my life, confess all, and——"

"Too late!" exclaimed Micara, in a calm passionless voice. "Thou hast been warned—and warning has been thrown away upon thee! The hour of forbearance is past!"

The captain of the guard and the curate alone mounted the steps of the portico.—The latter no sooner saw the general of Capucini, than he inclined respectfully before him—his power to save the man was gone.

"Captain," said the monk, "you will

take this man and lodge him in the Holy Office!"

"No, no—not there!" exclaimed the prisoner, with a shudder. "Anywhere but there!"

"And remember," continued Micara, "that you are responsible to me for the execution of my order, and the appearance of your prisoner."

The officer bowed, and said that from his hands only could he receive him.

"True?" replied the Capucin, take him."

The Transtaverini, although a powerful, muscular man, shrank like a child at the grasp of the speaker; his arms and limbs seemed paralysed—his hands relaxed their hold, and he fell into the arms of the soldiers like a being suddenly deprived of strength.

"Away with him!" he added.

The rest of the men stood around him, and he was carried off to the prison most dreaded in Rome—that of the Holy Office, or Inquisition.

Turning towards our hero, Micara offered to conduct him to his hotel. The offer was too valuable to be declined, for dark, menacing groups were gathered at distances in the piazza: the presence of the monk was the guarantee of his safety.

"Farewell," he said, as he left them; you will be wise not to quit the shelter of the casa to-night—to-morrow I will issue orders that shall insure your safety!"

With a benevolent smile, he left him, and Henry mounted to the apartment of his friend.

"Curse him!" muttered Martingale, as soon as he beheld our hero; "again he has escaped them!" and added aloud: "so soon back, dear Henry?"

"My life has been attempted!"

"Heavens! by whom?"

"I know not: but in the morning I shall be prepared to ask the question of my enemy: the wretch he employed to assail me is in the hands of the Holy Office; but good night," he added, "I will not detain you—in the morning we shall meet again."

Martingale, with difficulty masking his confusion, left the room.

"I am so glad you are returned!" exclaimed the invalid, extending his hand as Henry entered his chamber; "I began to have such strange misgivings."

"Misgivings?" repeated his friend.

"Yes; and poor Martingale more than shared them. I am certain that he takes a deep interest in you, Harry!"

"Indeed! Why so?"

"Oh, I am sure of it! when the hour advanced and you did not return, he became quite uneasy, hoped you would not leave the Casa Borghese alone—spoke of the danger of traversing the streets of Rome at night—related so many anecdotes of the different assassinations which had taken place, that his cheek grew pale, and my heart beat to hear him."

"How cruelly I have wronged him?" thought our hero.

At an early hour the following morn-

ing, the assassin was brought before the Sacred Tribunal. Micara, who took an interest in the safety of the young Englishman, was determined to leave no means untried to discover his enemy.

"Your name?" he said to the prisoner.

"Pietro Alessandro!"

"How often have you been accused before the Holy Office?" demanded his judge.

"Twice, illustrissimo!"

"And each time of murder, or at least an attempt at murder?" observed Micara, drily.

The prisoner hung his head.

"Now then, Pietro, hear me! the mercy even of this patient and long-enduring tribunal is at last exhausted. The last time you were dismissed, you were told the result, if ever you fell beneath its censure again."

"Mercy?"

"It is my duty—"

"Mercy, padre mio, this time; it was only an *Inglesi*!"

"To pronounce," continued the priest—"A heretic!"

"A sentence, which ample confession may perhaps induce me to use my influence with the council to mitigate; but remember it must be ample."

"It shall—most ample."

"The name of your employer?"

"I do not know it, father!"

"Trifle with me," exclaimed the priest, sternly, "and thy fate is sealed! Was it not that disgrace to his nobility and the name of Rome—the Prince Colonna?"

"The Prince Colonna?" repeated the ruffian—"no, I swear to you, holy father, that I have never seen the prince; at least for two years."

"Who then?"

"An *Inglesi*!"

"An *Inglesi*!" repeated the priest—thoughtfully; "may this be true? And he resides?" he added.

"At the hotel in the Corso."

Without further question, the priest waved to the attendants to remove their prisoner, and, calling for an apparitor, placed a blank order in his hand.

It was to be filled with the name of Robert Martingale.

Fram the position which the general of the Capucini held, as one of the supreme judges of the Holy Office, there were few circumstances occurring in the Eternal City which were not made known to him. At first he had suspected that the Prince Colonna—a proud, passionate, dissipated man, whom public rumor had long designated as the lover of the beautiful Pauline—was the instigator of the murderous attempt upon our hero. The confession of the assassin, however, had undeceived him: he did not doubt the sincerity of that confession an instant—for he well knew that the hold he possessed upon his terrors was greater than the dread of violating any oath he might have taken to his employer.

"Such," he said, "are the sad results of human passion, human pride. In the

path of crime, our earlier steps are slow, and marked by doubt and hesitation ; but as the wretch proceeds, the declivity becomes more steep—he cannot pause, but plunges headlong in the dread abyss, which sooner or later must engulf him. This young Englishman interests me," he added ; "there is a freshness and simplicity in his character which proves him to be unswayed by the world. I will probe this matter to its depths, and strike a blow to appal his enemies!"

Seating himself at the table, he wrote a few lines to our hero, requesting his attendance on the following day ; when he had sealed it with the broad signet of his office, he summoned one of the officials of the Holy Office.

"This," he said "to English Signor Ashton in the morning."

With a mute sign of obedience, the man retired, and the excellent Micara almost directly after withdrew to the solitude of his convent.

At a later hour that same evening, after most of her guests had left the gilded saloons of the Duchess of Devonshire, Cardinal Gonzalvi entered the boudoir of her grace : he found her engaged in an animated conversation with several of her fair countrywomen, who appeared deeply interested in the subject.

"I am sure we shall succeed!" he heard her say. "The heart of Pius VII. has known suffering, and suffering has taught him mercy ; and see," she added, turning towards his eminence, "here comes the good genius of our project!"

The churchman bowed, with a gallantry and grace which many a layman might have envied. George IV., who was no bad judge of manners, pronounced him one of the most elegant men he had ever met.

It is a fact, perhaps not generally known that, upon the downfall of Napoleon, the Cardinal Gonzalvi was secretly accredited to the cabinet of St. James's, and received in a semi-official manner by the Tory minister of the day. He was even present at one of the levees, on which occasion, despite the hints and indirect advice he received, his eminence maintained the dignity of the Roman purple—by appearing in his scarlet soutan and pelerine. In the list of presentations he was announced merely as Monsignor Gonzalvi : so little was known of foreign titles at the time, that it passed unnoticed.

Exeter Hall was not in existence at the time.

"Have you succeeded?" exclaimed the duchess.

"Not without some difficulty," replied her visitor ; "for you know that I never interfere in ecclesiastical matters ; fortunately, however, the vicar of his holiness had occasion to require my services, and I —"

"Proffered service for service?" interrupted her grace.

"Even so!"

He placed, as he spoke, a small slip of

parchment in the hands of the lady, on which something was written in Latin—it was sealed with the Pontifical seal.

"What is this?" she demanded.

"The order you seek," replied his eminence.

"And there can be no hesitation—no excuse?" inquired the kind-hearted woman, who felt deeply interested in the success of Henry Ashton's attempt to release Lady Mowbray from her ill-considered vows. "The superior of the Theresians has twice refused me admission to my unhappy friend. Should this fail," she added, "the opportunity we have so long sought for will be thrown away."

"Fear not!" replied his eminence, with a quiet smile ; "I know whom I have to deal with : no form has been neglected. Were Lady Mowbray on her death-bed, receiving the last solemn rites of the church, at the sight of that parchment every barrier would fall, and you would be admitted to her presence!"

"But can she leave her prison?"

"As freely as if no vow had passed her lips! For four-and-twenty hours she is a free agent."

"Enough!" said the duchess, turning towards her friends ; "I answer for the rest!"

CHAPTER X.

The village alehouse, where the gossips meet,
To talk of tales long past, of present changes :
Old men, the chroniclers of by-gone days,
Frequent the chimney nook.

HEIR OF THE SEPT.

THE King's Arms at Mortlake, was one of those quiet, old-fashioned country inns, so fast disappearing from the road-sides and villages of England, before the united inroads of steam and rail. In its well-sanded, dreamy, odd chambers, the wayworn traveler—as the merry knight of Shakespeare expresses it—might take his ease, secure of hospitable treatment, comfortable fare, and reasonable charges—things, we regret to add, which are daily becoming more scarce.

It was not much frequented by strangers, but had its stated customers, depending chiefly for support upon the tradesmen of the place, the servants of the neighbouring gentry, and the market-gardeners—rather a numerous class, for the land round Mortlake and Sheen is cultivated chiefly for the supply of the London markets. These persons regularly passed their evenings in the parlour or tap-room of the hostel, according to their respective standing in the village.

Every parlour and tap-room has its oracle ; men who are thought wise, because they pronounce dogmatically. Such persons are as jealous of their authority and opinions as a coquette of her lovers, or a politician of his influence.

The great gun of the parlour was the village school-master—a canny Scotchman—who had educated most of the rising generation of Mortlake. Like many of his

countrymen, he possessed considerable shrewdness and some learning. The former he used to maintain the position he had assumed, by playing off one party against another, studying their weakness, from which he drew his strength, in order to hold the balance between them.

Modern statesmen, in a wider sphere of action, do the same.

His learning was displayed in scraps of odd, out-of-the-way knowledge, and curious anecdotes connected with the traditions of the place. In politics he was a Whig—perhaps something more; had a great respect for the now almost forgotten names of Hunt and Cobbett—had a perfect horror of the *Times*, whose editors he pronounced ready-made rascals, although he acknowledged their talent.

Amble—the name of the schoolmaster—like other great men, was not without his weak point. His consisted in the idea that he was possessed of a remarkably fine bass voice. With all his quips and oddities, he was a fine-hearted old fellow, ever ready to contribute his mite to the distressed; quarreling one moment with a neighbor, inconveniencing himself, perhaps, to serve him the next. He had never been known to bear resentment four-and-twenty hours but once, and then it must be owned the provocation was sufficiently strong to palliate, if not justify, the unchristian-like feeling. An artist, a painter of men and manners, had disputed the excellence of his lower G; more, he had even had the cruelty to induce a friend—one of the bassos of the Opera House—to spend an evening in the parlor of the King's Arms, and sing the old man's favorite—indeed, his only song—

I am a friar of orders grey,
And down in the valley I take my way.

The *habitues* of the room very properly discountenanced the attempt, by declaring that it was nothing like the schoolmaster's—and it was not.

Amble's dignity was deeply wounded. A man with one song is like a man with one idea. Woe to those who anticipate the former or venture to dispute the latter.

The oracle of the tap-room was an old Thames waterman, known by the name of Kit Crust; and never, perhaps, were name and character better assimilated. He agreed with no one; and maintained his influence, from that very reason, over all. He once had the honor of forming one of the boat's crew which rowed George III. and his queen from Kew to Richmond; and, no matter what the argument or subject of conversation, he invariably clenched his opinion, by alluding to that glorious fact. It was whispered amongst his most intimate friends that he had left directions to have engraved upon his tombstone—for he was well to do in the world—

"Here lies Kit Crust, who helped to row his Most Gracious Majesty George III."

Although their orbits were different, the schoolmaster and the boatman sometimes

clashed: not in their persons, but opinions. This was occasioned by the frequenters of either room, dissatisfied with the judgment of their own oracle, appealing to that of the other—a species of treason against their authority which either potentate resented.

Both parlour and tap-room, on the evening we are about to describe, were agitated by a rumour that Red Ralph, Remnant's cowboy, had encountered a certain nameless personage in Cromwell House.

Of course our readers have not forgotten the fright the lad received from the ayah, on the occasion of his last visit to the dilapidated mansion of the great regicide.

Never previously had Ralph found himself an object of such general interest. After relating his tale in the tap-room, he had been sent for into the parlour. Amble had even condescended to pat him on the head—an honour which raised the lad considerably in his own esteem; for, like most of the youngsters in the place, he stood in great awe of the schoolmaster.

Just as he was about to recommence his narration for the fifth time, two travelers made their appearance in the parlour of the little inn. One was an elderly, gentlemanly-looking man, between forty and fifty years of age. His companion, who had rather a rustic look, was young enough to be his son.

So little were the frequenters of the room accustomed to see strangers amongst them, that every eye was directed towards the new comers, as if they almost resented their intrusion, and then turned towards Amble, to ask his opinion of them. The old man nodded solemnly once or twice between the whiffs of his pipe, as much as to say—"Wait awhile—I'll sound their bearings."

Ralph having repeated his wonderful story, was dismissed to the kitchen, where the chambermaid and cook were impatiently waiting to hear him: the latter, with professional instinct, guessed the way to his confidence—she placed the remains of a rabbit pie before him: it was savoury enough to serve as a key even to a policeman's heart.

"Well, doctor," exclaimed a shrewd-looking young man, who had lately settled in Mortlake as a builder and architect; "what is your opinion of this rigmarole?"

The schoolmaster hesitated: the question was somewhat novel. Like a prudent man, he paused before compromising himself by pronouncing judgment.

"Suspicious, but not conclusive," replied the pedagogue at last; "incline which way you will, doubt, like a recurring decimal, will return. The *rigmarole*—which, *par parenthèse*, is a vile word—would appear probable, if it were not impossible."

"You are no believer in ghosts, sir?" observed the elder of the two strangers, who had been an interested listener to the boy's story.

"In scriptural ones, sir—scriptural ones.

I believe in Saul and the witch of Endor!" was the reply.

"And the one which warned your own Scottish monarch, James, before the fatal fight at Flodden?" added the gentleman; "for I perceive, by your accent, that you are from the other side of the border."

This was a sore hit—a very sore one—to Amble; who, like many of his countrymen, laboured under the delusion that he spoke English with a purity and accent which defied detection. A quiet smile played upon the features of most present.

"You have been told, sir," he answered rather tartly, "that I am from Scotland—I never deny my country; But let that flea stick by the wall, as the old saying is. As you are so learned in accents," he added, "doubtless ye must have been a great traveler?"

The stranger shook his head, to negative the supposition.

"Or at least seen many strange things in the course of your life?" continued the speaker. "Now, what is your opinion of this *rigmarole*, as my young friend classically calls it?"

"Nothing can be more simple," replied the gentleman; "the boy has been frightened by his own imagination."

"But Ralph has no imagination," observed the school-master, with a chuckle; "Nature has denied him the faculty!"

"Or has been terrified at finding himself alone in an uninhabited house, to which so many strange reports are attached," added the stranger.

"But Cromwell House is not uninhabited," added the Scotchman.

The two strangers exchanged glances, and the younger one whispered to his companion, in an under tone, the name of the ayah.

Elworthy—for it was no other than the lawyer and Joe Beans who had introduced themselves into the society assembled in the little parlour at the King's Arms—nodded assent.

"By some ancient family who have long possessed it, no doubt?" he observed.

"Ancient or young," replied Amble, "we ken very little about them—the place is kept locked and guarded like a prison: now and then the gates are opened to admit a carriage which whisks through the village, and that is all any one sees of the inhabitants."

"But they pay well," observed the grocer.

"And regularly," chimed in the baker; "so they must be respectable."

The butcher, with whom they had not yet dealt, was of a different opinion.

"We shall see strange things soon," observed the sexton—who, since the fright he had received on the night of his visit to the church with the Khan, had been a constant frequenter of the inn; "for my part, I believe the boy's story—the powers of darkness are loosed!"

All eagerly pressed the speaker to explain himself. Prudence, of course, kept

him silent. His traffic with the mysterious recluse in the cottage had not been of a nature to bear explanation. Many of the relatives of those whose heads he had supplied him with—as he believed, for no christian purpose—were present. All that could be drawn from him were muttered exclamations of—

"Time will show—time will show!"

"But show us what?"

The sexton shuddered, and spoke no more, but soon afterwards he left the room.

"Old cross-bones has seen something!" whispered the landlord to the schoolmaster.

"If it was worse than himself," was the reply, "It must have been hideous, indeed!"

The two travelers had arranged to pass the night at the little inn. The elder one almost immediately afterwards retired to rest, leaving his companion to follow up the design which had brought them to Mortlake.

Red Ralph, who had been the hero of the night, both in the parlour and tap-room, was wending his way towards the cottage where he resided with his aged grandmother.

Whistling as he went, for want of thought—when a hand was gently laid upon his shoulder: the boy started, and turned.

"Lord bless I," he exclaimed; "why didst thee frighten a body so?"

"Don't be frightened!"

"I beant," replied Ralph, perfectly satisfied that the speaker was human; "there be plenty of folks near."

"And if there were not," said Joe Beans—for it was no other than our old acquaintance—"you would have nothing to fear from me! Ralph," he added, "are you fond of money?"

"Yes!" answered the savage, with a broad grin.

The young man took from his pocket five sovereigns, and showed them in the palm of his hand to the cowboy, who probably had never seen so much gold at one time in his life. It appeared a treasure to his unsophisticated mind.

"Be all that gowd?" he demanded.

Joe nodded.

"Real gowd?"

"As good," said the young man, "as ever came from the Bank. Now listen to me—on one condition they are yours!"

"Mine?" repeated the astonished lad.

"Yes!"

"What, all?"

"All!"

"And what mun I do for it?"

"Introduce me to Cromwell House!"

"Noa!" answered Ralph, with a shudder; "Noa! I shouldn't so much moind, if it wor day!"

"Day or night—what difference can that make?"

"The ghostes never come by day," muttered the urchin, casting a greedy look upon the coins which Joe still held in his extended hand.

"Listen to me, Ralph," replied the young man.

"I will."

"The ghost you have seen was no ghost—only a black woman—one of the servants of the house. I have seen her a dozen times in a distant part of the country. Of course you have heard of black people?"

The lad hesitated: he certainly had heard of black men—nay, he had even seen one—a sailor, who had strayed from the classic purlieus of Wapping to the rustic shades of Mortlake. Therefore he knew that there were such things as black men in the world—it was the existence of black women that he doubted; but, as the schoolmaster observed, he had no imagination.

"Will 'ee go with I?" he demanded, after a pause.

"The very thing I have been requesting," said Joe.

"Dang it, then, but I'll try!" exclaimed Ralph, with sudden resolution; "if thee beant afeard, I don't see why should I be! Let I just feel the gowd—I never touched a real suyrin afore!"

"More," said the young man; "you shall have one in your pocket, as an earnest of the rest."

So saying, he placed one of the glittering coins in the hand of the lad, who grinned and laughed with delight—he swelled with the importance of his newly acquired wealth.

"I'll go—I'll go!" he chuckled, his courage wonderfully strengthened by the magnetic touch; "but it be really a woman," he added, "and no ghost?"

"Really a woman."

"Follow I!" continued the boy; "they may lock the gates and bar the *winders*, but they can't bar I out of Cromwell House—it be loike a rabbit burrow: there be plenty of ways in and out. Don't 'ee speak," he added, as they approached the narrow lane running parallel with the lawn in front of the mansion; "and if anybody comes, do as I do."

"And what may that be?" demanded Joe Beans.

By way of illustrating his intention, Red Ralph fell upon his hands and knees and began creeping like a dog under the shadow of the hedge.

Joe had too frequently practised the same feat, when he and Henry Ashton were boys together, and they had stolen from the farm on a moonlight night, to try the farmer's gun upon the common, to find the least difficulty in following his example.

"By gum!" exclaimed the cow-boy, with a chuckle; "but thee beest one of the right sort! Thee beest used to it!"

CHAPTER XI.

Foul deeds will rise,
Though all the earth o'erwhelm them to men's
eyes.
SHAKESPEARE.

The morning at last arrived on which Sir Thomas Lawrence was to present our hero to the Sovereign Pontiff, Pius VII., a prince in whose gentle heart the spirit of

persecution had never entered. Even his great enemy, Napoleon, loved him for his gentleness, respected him for his firmness of character—although that firmness had thwarted one of the darling schemes of his ambition. He had endured captivity and exile patiently. Restored to his throne by the allies, after the downfall of his persecutor, he bore his honors meekly.

Since the days of Gangarelli—whom English travelers named the Protestant Pope—no one had filled the Papal throne with greater humility than the good and amiable Charlemonti, who, previous to his elevation to the chair of St. Peter, had even been suspected of liberalism by the Ultramontanes. The shelter which, in the hour of adversity, he afforded to the family of his fallen persecutor, speaks more for the benevolence of his heart, than a hundred panegyrics.

To the unhappy Lady Mowbray the interview was a most important one: it was to decide, as she fondly imagined, between home and the cloister—the recovery of her son, the restoration of her matron fame, and that living tomb which excludes the worm, but not the vain regrets and broken hopes to which death brings relief.

"Farewell, dear Walter!" said Henry Ashton, pressing the hand of his friend, who for the first time had been permitted to quit his bed of suffering for a couch, near the window. "Our kind friend Martingle will more than supply thy place till I return."

The gentle smile of the invalid and his glance seemed to reproach the speaker for supposing that any one could supply his place: no—much as he felt disposed to like his new acquaintance, Walter Mowbray felt that he never could become to him a friend like Henry.

The agent of Meeran Hafaz saw the glance, and it annoyed him—for, by one of those strange contradictions of humanity, he felt desirous of securing the friendship of the youths whose happiness he was plotting against. He liked them from sympathy—he destroyed them from calculation. In feeling he was a sentimental—in morals a mathematician.

"I will do my best," he said; "but Walter says truly, I cannot replace you!"

The friends looked surprised, and the invalid observed that he had not uttered a word.

"Words," continued the speaker, "are but the signs of thought. A look will often express them far more eloquently. I frequently glean from them more than from language. We may school our tongues, but not our eyes: they are the windows of the soul, and, curtain them as we may, the spirit will peep forth."

"A philosopher!" exclaimed Henry, laughingly.

"No, a mere observer. Life is too short to analyse."

"And what has observation taught you?" demanded Mowbray.

"To doubt!" was the bitter and some-

what sarcastic reply ; "none but dreamers trust!"

"Out upon thee for a slanderer of thyself!" exclaimed Henry Ashton. "Do not believe him, Walter—it is but a momentary spleen. I am sure that he would rather live the world's blind fool, than act its heartless cynic! To hear him prate, one would almost think his heart a charnel-house—its tenant, bitter ashes!"

"Well, well!" exclaimed the deceiver, with affected carelessness, "you will persuade me that I am better than I judge myself!"

Shortly after our hero had taken his departure, one of the domestics of the hotel entered the room, to say that a gentleman desired to speak with the Signor Ashton.

"You know he has left the Casa?" observed Martingale.

"I told him so," continued the man; "but either he would not believe me, or had his own reasons for persevering. He is in the next apartment."

"The next apartment?" repeated both the young man, with surprise.

"I dared not refuse him," said the waiter, in an apologetic tone. Then, lowering his voice, he added, "he is a member of the secret police of Rome—they penetrate everywhere!"

At the word "police," despite his habitual self-command, the countenance of Martingale changed. Something whispered that the visit boded him no good.

"I will see this man myself!" he said, addressing the invalid, "and learn his business. Police?" he repeated, with an attempt to smile; "this is some stupid mistake of the servants."

"We never mistake, signor," replied the man; "there is not a domestic in any one of the inns of Rome—from the Hotel d'Espagna to the humblest osteria—but is acquainted with them."

"Why so?"

The poor fellow shrugged his shoulders—the usual resource of an Italian when he either fears or does not wish to give an answer.

It is a fact no less degrading to the Pontifical government than the character of its subjects, that no man is allowed to serve as waiter in Rome, unless he consents to act as a spy for the police, whose agents are sent round daily to collect their reports. We recollect perfectly complaining on more than one occasion to Franz, our landlord, in the Via Condotti, of the impertinence of his porter; several of his guests, as well as ourself, advised him to discharge him: the poor fellow dared not—in fact, could not—he had been imposed upon him by the secret police.

This occurred in 'forty-eight, the year of revolutions over two-thirds of Europe.

Although far from suspecting the real character of the treacherous man who, like a serpent, had introduced himself to his and Henry's friendship, Walter Mowbray could not avoid thinking it rather singular that Martingale should carefully close the

door which communicated with the saloon, as he left the room. In the low, nervous state to which his wounds had reduced him, it slightly irritated him; but the feeling gradually gave way to one of a yet deeper interest as a word spoken in a louder tone than the rest caught his ear.

"Would I were strong enough to leave the sofa!" he murmured; "would I were strong enough!"

When Martingale entered the *salon de réception*, he found a shrewd-looking, elderly man, plainly but gentlemanly dressed, seated at the table, upon which was the traveling desk in which Henry Ashton kept his correspondence and his papers. The Italian turned his cold, searching glance upon the Englishman, as if he would read him through. The traitor endured the scrutiny unmoved: he had strung his nerves for the occasion—like his heart, they were of iron.

"The Signor Ashton, I, presume?" said the agent of the police.

"His friend only," replied the accomplished deceiver. "The signor is absent."

"And when will he return?"

Martingale shrugged his shoulders, as much as to intimate that it was one of those questions which he found it impossible to answer.

"The signor is young," he said, "and has many engagements into which friendship must not pry too curiously."

The Italian smiled—he perfectly comprehended the insinuation.

"Can you tell me," he inquired, "if your friend has lately received letters from England?"

"Not very lately, I believe, the post is so irregular," replied Martingale. "I know that some weeks since he complained of it bitterly. But may I ask the motive of such a question?"

"I belong to the police of Rome," answered the stranger.

The Englishman drew himself up with well-affected surprise.

"The secret police," added the visitor.

"I really do not see how my friend the Signor Ashton, attached to the British embassy in Naples, can have roused the suspicion of the Roman government. Any communication would have been more *en règle* from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Cardinal Gonzalvi, who honours him with his friendship."

"I know it," replied the Italian, perfectly deceived by the cool self-possession and assumed haughtiness of the speaker; "my visit is a friendly one."

Martingale expressed increased surprise.

"When I say a friendly one, it is made in his interest. As you are the friend of the signor, there can be no impropriety in my intrusting you with the affair."

"You must be the best judge of that," was the reply, uttered with such well affected indifference, that it deceived even the wily agent of the police; "I can have no opinion on the subject."

"The correspondence," said the man,

lowering his voice, "has been tampered with?"

"By the Government?"

"Fie, signor—fie!" exclaimed the visitor; "the supposition is unjust. The government of the Holy Father is no less noted for its parental benignity than its honourable conduct towards strangers. It would blush to—"

Martingale began to yawn. The speaker, seeing that the eloquent vindication of the Pontifical government which he was about to utter would be thrown away, at once dropped the subject.

"No, signor; by some agent from England."

The Englishman shook his head incredulously.

"Certain!" continued the man; "we have the confession of the *employé* at the post-office, whose extravagant expenditure first excited the suspicions of his superiors. He has received three hundred ducats," he added, in a tone which betrayed more envy than indignation, "just for giving up a few letters?"

"Is it possible?"

"Fact, signor—fact!"

"But from whom?"

"That we have yet to learn," continued the agent.

"The fool does not even know the name of the party who bribed him! But we shall discover him!"

"I trust so."

"Sure of it—sure of it!" exclaimed the man. "Pucinelli"—the name of the *employé*—has described him as a tall, gentlemanly person, about your own height, signor; dark hair and whiskers—yours, by-the-bye, are dark—and wearing a remarkably fine emerald upon the third finger of the left hand."

Martingale looked the speaker full in the face, as he turned the accusing gem upon his finger till the stone was concealed in the palm of his hand.

"The emerald," he coolly observed, "may certainly lead to his detection. Pray, proceed—you interest me."

"Pucinelli has confessed that he has affixed the impress of the Roman post to several letters which the stranger brought."

"The idiot!" mentally ejaculated his listener.

"They must have been forgeries," added the agent.

"Doubtless!"

"If the Signor Ashton would only give them up—"

"My friend cannot make the least objection," calmly observed Martingale; "on the contrary, he will feel, I am assured, deeply grateful for the conduct of the police in the affair. Signor Ashton has been treated infamously. By-the-bye," he added, in a careless tone, as if the question he was about to put had only the least possible interest for him, "what is the punishment for the fellow's crime?"

"For receiving a bribe, signor, a year's imprisonment."

Martingale smiled.

"But for attesting a forged document or letter with a government seal," added the speaker, "it is treason—the galleys for life."

"For the principal?"

"For him and his accomplice," answered the agent, who doubted not that he was impressing the Englishman with a very favorable opinion of Roman justice; therefore it is that we require the letters—without them we can do comparatively little."

"What do you call little?" inquired the arch deceiver.

"Imprisonment, as I stated, signor, for the clerk—but nothing to his employer; and he is the person we are most anxious to get hold of."

"In which praiseworthy attempt I sincerely trust you may succeed," said Martingale, rising from his chair, to intimate that the interview was at an end. "I will report faithfully to my friend all that you have stated, and doubtless he will at once communicate with the authorities upon the subject; meanwhile," he added, "your zeal must not go unacknowledged."

So saying, he thrust several pieces of gold into the hand of the police agent.

"Ah, signor," exclaimed the fellow with a bow; "there is no nation like the *Inglesi* for—"

The speaker suddenly stopped. As the donor dropped the gold into his palm, he caught sight of the emerald turned to the inside of Martingale's hand. To seize it was the thought and work of an instant—his cringing, respectful manner vanished at once.

"Cospetto!" he exclaimed, "what a fool have I been all this while! You are my prisoner!"

"Hush!" whispered the detected villain; "an affair of state!"

The astute agent smiled—he was not to be baffled twice.

"Signor Ashton is suspected of conspiring with the malcontents of Naples, against the Pontifical government."

"Si non e vero e ben trovato," was the reply.

"How much," demanded Martingale, "for forgetting that you have seen this idle toy upon my finger—fifty ducati?"

"Fifty!" repeated the agent, "signor, you insult me! I am a member of the secret police; you could not buy the connivance of the poorest of us *at such a price!*"

"I see my error," whispered the prisoner; "it should have been a hundred!"

"Two hundred, you mean!" replied his captor: "not a baocchi less! *Corpo di Baccho!* it gives you an opportunity of destroying the letters! I dare say you know where to find them!"

Fortunately for Martingale, he had more than the required sum upon him, in notes of the Banco Romano. The police agent would have preferred gold—but as that was impossible, he contented himself with accepting the emerald ring, the possession

which had proved so unfortunate to its owner, as a *buono mano* for his complaisance.

"And now, signor," he said, resuming his former humility, after he had pocketed the bribe, "you are free. Adieu! I commend my soul to your prayers!"

With this not unusual salutation, the fellow withdrew, leaving the agent of Meeren Hafaz alarmed, but not crushed by the difficulties which were rapidly gathering round him.

"I must be prompt!" he muttered; "decision will oft restore to healthful vigor the cause which despondency would abandon as hopeless—the letters are the only proofs which can compromise me—the unsupported evidence of my weak accomplice will tell as nothing: they must be mine," he added, with stern resolution, "at any sacrifice—at any cost!"

So saying, he deliberately took up the desk, which was upon the table near him, and began to tamper with the lock; with considerable difficulty he at last succeeded in forcing the blade of a strong knife between the interstices: after repeated efforts the bolt sprang back.

"They are mine!" he said.

"Villain!" exclaimed a feeble voice near him; and at the same moment a trembling hand was laid upon his shoulder. He turned suddenly round, and beheld Walter Mowbray. The faithful friend, who had with pain contrived to drag himself from the sofa to the door of the saloon, had overheard the last part of the traitor's conversation with the secret agent of the police. His first thought had been to conceal the knowledge he had thus obtained till the return of Henry; but at the sight of Martingale forcing the desk of his friend, indignation got the better of prudence, and, weak and nerveless as he was, he attempted to restrain him.

For a few seconds the two young men stood gazing upon each other in silence. The countenance of the detected felon was even paler than that of the invalid, to whose features contempt and scorn lent their honest flush.

"So," said Martingale, "you have overheard ——"

"Everything! Quit the house, before I summon the domestics to chase you like a thief from the roof whose hospitality you have so infamously abused! Is this your friendship? God!" he added, "I had almost accused myself of ingratitude, in not esteeming you as I ought! At last I know you!"

"Not yet!" was the cool reply; "but you will before we part! Not that the knowledge will be of much value to you!"

The ferocious expression in the eye of the ruffian, even more than his words, warned Walter Mowbray of his danger. Tottering from exhaustion and agitation, he advanced towards the bell; the ruffian perceived his design, and intercepted him in an instant.

"You must retire to your room!" he said.

"Not till I have exposed your villainy!" replied the indignant youth.

Without another word, Martingale seized him in his arms, carried him, as he would a child, into the inner apartment, and cast him, with considerable violence, upon the bed. The invalid was too much enfeebled by the shock to stir or offer the least resistance. The unmanly villain coolly fastened the door.

"What is it you intend—to murder me?" demanded the unresisting victim.

"Even so!" was the reply: "Fool, whom a breath can crush, to cross my path! You will denounce me!—it must be from the grave then!"

"Monster! Henry will avenge me!"

"He will never know it!" answered Martingale, tauntingly. "My sorrow for your death will rival his! The world has made me no bad actor. I but play the part your folly and mine own necessity assign me! Fear not," he added, "I will not torture you! One blow, and thy thread of life, which is frail as the web the spider weaves, is broken! By all but me your death will be attributed to the internal rupture of an artery. I heard Dr. Kissock say the least shock would cause it!"

"Will it appear so to heaven?" faintly exclaimed the sufferer.

"It will not be the only secret," brutally observed Martingale, "which the holy place you name holds in its keeping!"

Without the least remorse, twice the brutal murderer struck the unresisting youth upon the chest with his clenched hand. At the first blow a violent shudder ran through his frame, occasioned as much by a sense of the indignity as suffering, and a light crimson froth came bubbling to his lips: still not a groan or sigh escaped him—his eyes were fixed, with an expression of proud scorn, on his assassin; at the second, he sank with a deep groan upon the pillow, from which he had tried to raise himself.

Where was Henry then? His arm would have arrested the blows, or quickly have avenged them.

Even age seldom resigns itself to death without a struggle—the love of life planted by nature in the breasts of all, prompts it, though feeble and unavailing. To youth, the approach of the grim tyrant is doubly terrible, for it falls like an untimely blight upon the spring buds of love, with its bright dreams and promises, friendships, joys, ambitious, soul-inspiring energies. To the old, death is a sacrifice—to the young, a martyrdom.

"Monster!" murmured Walter, "have you no pity?"

"None!"

"No remorse?"

"Still less!" replied the murderer; "and yet I would willingly have spared you, for I have no cause of enmity—more, I rather liked you. Your own prying curiosity has rendered your death neces-

sary. Blame it and destiny—but do not blame me!"

For some moments he waited, trusting to see his victim breathe his last. It was not without a feeling of remorse, despite his callous indifference to suffering, that he prepared to complete his only half-accomplished purpose.

At this moment, Martingale either heard, or fancied that he heard, some one in the adjoining room. He proceeded resolutely to the door, which he unlocked—the saloon was empty.

"What cowards," he muttered, "does conscience make us! I could have sworn I heard a step!"

Walter had imagined it, too, and his eyes followed the footsteps of his assassin to the door. When he saw him coolly close it, the last hope vanished from his heart; not the hope of life—that he felt was elbbing from him; but the desire of once more clasping the hand of his absent friend—of expiring in the arms of one he loved—of warning him of his danger—of leaving an avenger.

Martingale contemplated him in silence. He read what was passing in his mind.

"It would be a false humanity," he said, "to prolong your agony. Would I could have spared it, but that is now impossible."

A third blow, more violent than the preceding ones, followed. In an instant, the linen of the bed was deluged with the life-blood of the generous youth, who had sacrificed himself to honor and to friendship.

Happily his sufferings were but momentary. The slender thread which bound him to existence was broken; a film spread over his dying eyes, and he expired, attempting to murmur the names dearest to him—Henry and Therese.

The instant Martingale was assured of the death of Walter Mowbray, he unlocked the door, and, flying to the bell, began to ring violently. The peal, as might be expected, quickly alarmed the house. When the waiters entered the apartment, he was supporting, with hypocritical pity, the dead man in his arms.

"Fly!" he exclaimed; "assistance! Dr. Kinscock!"

Then, with all the despair of well-acted friendship, he called upon Walter to speak for his sake.

As the domestics left the room, the murderer fancied that the principal waiter cast a look of terror and horror upon him.

"Pshaw!" he muttered; "it must have been the sight of the idiot's blood—it could have been nothing else!"

In his confusion he had forgotten the letters. He hastened to the saloon to secure them—the desk had disappeared.

For a few moments he stood thunderstruck—he felt that the arm he had so long braved at last had reached him, and the blow had benumbed that ready action and fertile spirit of which he was so vain. The proofs of his first crime must have been removed whilst the murder was being per-

petrated, and, if so, in all probability his second one was witnessed.

"I must fly!" he said, wiping the drops of cold perspiration and terror from his brow; "but while his blood is upon me, go where I will, it will accuse me!"

Hastily enveloping himself in a cloak belonging to Henry Ashton, he was about to quit the apartment, when the folding doors were thrown open, and an ecclesiastic, followed by a party of carbineers, entered the saloon.

"Signor Inglesi," said the apparitor, "you are my prisoner!"

"Prisoner!" exclaimed the baffled felon, endeavoring by assurance and self-possession to defeat the end of justice; "ridiculous! Upon what pretence do you presume to arrest an English gentleman?"

"For having conspired with and bribed a peasant, now in custody, to undertake the assassination of one of your countrymen," replied the official, not in the slightest degree affected by the airs of insulted virtue which the culprit gave himself. "Denial is useless," he added; "your accomplice is in prison!"

"For having murdered one of his countrymen! you may say," exclaimed the chief waiter—the same whose pale countenance and terror-stricken glance had attracted the notice of Martingale.

"Explain?" said the officer.

The man proceeded to relate how his suspicions had been excited by the visit of an officer of the secret police, and that he had determined to watch; how he had seen the attempted robbery of the desk by Martingale—his detection by the Signor Mowbray, with all the sickening details of the scene of cruelty which followed. As a matter of precaution, he had entered the saloon to secure the desk, which he naturally imagined must contain a vast amount of property, to tempt an English "milord"—as he designated the murderer—to commit so despicable an act.

His presence in the room and hasty retreat accounts for the step which had startled Martingale previous to the completion of his horrible design.

The apparitor, after consigning his prisoner to the guard of the soldiers, accompanied by the waiter and the landlord, who had made his appearance, entered the chamber of the dead. All was over—not a pulse beat; the pure and noble soul had quitted its frail tenement of clay, never to return, till the archangel's trumpet shall summon the grave to resign its prey.

The landlord of the hotel was loud in his expressions of grief; not so much for the crime, as for the injury it would do his establishment.

"I would have given a thousand scudi," he exclaimed, "rather than it should have happened here!"

The myrmidon of justice did not so much regard it—he was accustomed to such scenes: each one to his interests.

"I am ready to attend you, sir!" said Martingale, as the officer of justice made

his appearance in the saloon. "This *contretemps*"—as the cool-headed villain designated the murder of his victim—"must, I presume, be explained elsewhere. Where," he added, with one of his most elegant bows, "must I have the honor of accompanying you—to the city prison?"

"No!" replied the apparitor.

"Where, then?"

"To the prison of the Most Holy Inquisition!"

At the name of that dreaded tribunal, a scarcely-perceptible shudder ran through the veins of the assassin: he knew that, whatever else might be their failings, her judges were incorruptible—her dungeons inaccessible to all but the steps of justice.

"Perhaps," he said, trying to recover himself, "you will permit me to stop on my way for one moment, at my hotel?"

"No!"

"Any fee?" he added, in a lower tone.

For once Roman justice was not to be bribed: perhaps the offer was made too publicly. At a sign from the apparitor, the carbineers closed round their prisoner, and he was conducted to the courtyard of the hotel, where one of those dark, close carriages, whose appearance in the streets of Rome is never witnessed without a shudder, was in waiting.

Martingale entered it with the apparitor, and the next instant they drove off.

When Henry Ashton left the hotel, he directed his steps, in the first place, to the Dominican convent, in the hope of obtaining an interview with the Abbe Lucas, from whom he trusted to obtain some clue to the lost heir of Sir William Mowbray. It was not the first or second occasion on which he had attempted to see him; his visits had been frequent, but fruitless—the wily ecclesiastic was not to be spoken with. The application to the congregation of rites had alarmed him: he dreaded the scandal which the affair would cause—the unfavorable impression which the infamy of his relative's conduct might produce against himself. Hence he had used his interest with the council to reject it, and unfortunately succeeded but too well.

As usual, the lay-brother who answered his summons, informed him that the superior was not to be seen.

"Is he absent?" demanded our hero.

The monk hesitated. The piece of gold which the young man slid into his palm decided him, however, to speak.

"Not absolutely absent; that is to say," added the brother, lowering his voice, "Monsignore is engaged in the church, where a novice is pronouncing his vows."

It was enough. Henry had been long enough in Rome to know that upon such occasions the churches, even of the severest orders, are open to the public. He determined to enter and address the abbe—publicly, if necessary—and shame him into an explanation of his conduct. Fortunately the ceremony was nearly over when he arrived.

On entering the sacred edifice, the first

person he encountered was his old acquaintance, Father O'Hara, to whom he briefly related his fruitless visits, the evident resolution of the abbe to avoid him, and the determination he had come to to address him, even at the altar, since his obstinacy left him no other resource.

"It would be fruitless," replied the warm-hearted Capuchin, with an air of deep concern. "At a sign, you would be removed from the church."

"I care not!"

"But he is a Monsignore!" added his adviser.

The title of Monsignore is held in great respect in Rome; although, like the cardinalate, it is sometimes bestowed even upon laymen. It gives its possessor the rank of a prelate, without conferring any of the episcopal functions. When he bears it is a priest—as is universally the case with the heads of religious houses, and the chanoines of St. Peter—it is looked upon as a step to the purple.

"What care I for his rank?" impatiently whispered the young man. "I am heartsick of this denial of justice. If he chooses to provoke a public scandal, let him: it will have one good effect, at least—that of exposing him."

"Let me try my influence with him first," replied O'Hara. "It cannot be that he has any unworthy motive, as you suspect; the duties of his holy office alone have caused his declining your visit."

Henry remained silent. The little he had mingled with the world had shaken his boyish faith in man's integrity, but not in woman's faith—that still remained unbroken as his love for Ellen.

The robe of the monk enabled him to penetrate close to the elevated seat by the high altar, where the superior of the Dominicans was in the act of conferring the habit of his order upon the kneeling neophyte. Taking advantage of a pause in the ceremony, he whispered a few words in the ear of the abbe, over whose sombre countenance an expression of mingled surprise and vexation passed like a fleeting cloud. Then all was calm again.

He bowed his head, in token of assent.

"He will see you," whispered O'Hara to our hero, as he resumed his place by his side in the body of the church, "as soon as the office is over. I told you that you had misjudged him."

"I think not."

"What motive?"

"I do not pretend to decide on motives," replied Henry Ashton; "but I can judge of actions: and those of the Abbe Lucas have not placed him in the most favorable light."

He had not long to wait: shortly after, the brotherhood, with their superior at their head, passed from their stalls in the choir, through the body of the church. As the procession advanced, the priest scattered his benedictions on the kneeling crowd. There was a feeling of spiritual pride, perhaps, in the act; his cold, ser-

pent-like eye glanced full upon our hero, whose perseverance annoyed him : he seemed to ask if he had calculated their relative strength in the contest which was about to ensue.

The look was returned by one of steady defiance.

In a few minutes, a lay brother came to conduct Father O'Hara and Henry to the sacristy. When they entered the room, which received the rays of day through a richly stained window, they found the abbe seated, alone. He had divested himself of his priestly ornaments, and appeared in the simple dress of his order.

"My brother, signor," he said, pointing to the Capuchin, "informs me that you insist upon seeing me!"

"Even so."

"Although I do not usually yield to requests so proffered," continued the Dominican, "I have consented to receive you. May I request to be favored with the purport of your visit?"

"The Abbe Lucas, I believe," observed Henry Ashton, "is an Englishman?"

The monk bowed.

"He will permit me, then," continued the speaker, "to explain my purpose in the language common to us both?"

Hitherto the conversation had been in Italian.

"As you please."

"The principal motive of my visit to this country," continued the young man, "was to discover some traces of the lost heir of Sir William Mowbray. Fortune, which disappointed my hopes in one respect, has favored me beyond my expectation in another."

"And may I ask what that other is?"

"My meeting," said Henry, "with the deceived, the outraged, slandered wife of my friend ; her appeal to the congregation of *rites*, for the dissolution of her vows, has been disregarded."

"I have heard as much," replied the abbe : "was it to criticise the decision of that august body," he added, "that you have honored me with this interview?"

"No!" said the young man firmly : "although I am no stranger to the part you took in their decision, or the influence you exercise there. Enough! it was rejected—thank heaven, their judgment is not irrevocable!"

An uneasy glance from the priest to Father O'Hara, served to indicate his wish for further information upon the subject ; he feared the decision of the Sovereign Pontiff, if once the affair were brought before him.

Mentally he resolved to visit the Vatican, and obtain from the camilla positive information whether or not any attempt had been made to interest Pius in the question.

"Priest!" said Henry Ashton, with deep feeling ; "if the weaknesses of humanity are a stranger to your breast, its sympathies should at least be unchanged! Feel for the agony of a mother—the despair of a father, robbed of his only child. Say to

whose care you consigned the lost heir of Sir William Mowbray, and in the atonement find an intercession for the ill you have inflicted!"

The Abbe Lucas rose from his seat.

"I have acted," he said, sternly, "as conscience and honor dictated : the secret you would obtain dies with me!"

"Is this your final answer?"

"It is."

"Hear me!" said the indignant youth. "Whilst one pulse of life remains in the withered thing you call your heart, I will not resign the hope of obtaining it! I'll wring it from you! Where there is the will, the way may yet be found!"

So saying, he left the sacristy, to keep his appointment at the Vatican.

CHAPTER XII.

The quality of mercy is not strained—
It droppeth as the gentle dew from heaven,
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed :
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes ;
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest ; it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown.

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

ITALY boasts of many palaces rich in storied recollections—but only of one Vatican, which is the seat both of religious and civil monarchy : that empire over mind and matter which Rome has so long arrogated to herself.

The stately chambers and interminable galleries of this vast pile exceed, it is said, five thousand in number : a calculation which, extraordinary as it may appear, the writer of these pages—who, during his frequent visits to the Eternal City, has had no ordinary means of judging—considers as rather under than over the mark. These apartments are for the most part adorned only by the genius of painting and sculpture ; the upholstery fripperies which generally disfigure the seats of royalty, have not as yet been permitted to mask their noble proportions and architectural beauties. Priceless columns of the most precious marble—antique statues from the temples and palaces of Pagan Rome—mosaics from the public baths, with the matchless frescoes of Raphael, form the fit decorations of a shrine to which so many poetical and artistic pilgrims direct their wanderings.

Thrice hath Rome grasped the empire of the world : first by force, a second time by faith, and lastly, by that preëminence in art which even her enemies acknowledge. Her strength has become as a broken reed ; nations have cast off the yoke her pontiffs riveted ; whilst that the genius of her architects, poets, painters, and sculptors impose, remains unbroken.

In one of the unrivaled chambers we have attempted to describe, a venerable old man was seated, in a chair of state, slightly raised upon an estrade covered with tapestry from the looms of Arras : it was the reigning Pontiff, Pius VII.; his dark, thin locks, escaped from the white

culotte, or skull-cap, which he wore to hide his tonsure, fell on either side of his pallid countenance, in which traces of suffering and resignation were mingled; but the eye of the courageous priest who had braved the wrath of Napoleon at the height of his power, and generously sheltered his persecuted race after his downfall, was lustrous and penetrating; the weakness from which he suffered was of the body, not the mind—that remained unclouded to the last.

His costume was that usually worn by the popes in the retirement of their palace: a white soutan, falling in graceful folds to his feet, upon which were slippers of velvet, embroidered with golden crosses: it is from the custom of saluting these crosses, that a very general idea has arisen in Protestant lands, that visitors to the Sovereign Pontiff are expected to kiss his toe.

The rest of his costume consisted of a stole of cloth of gold, which fell to his feet, and a crimson cape, or pelerine, edged with ermine: upon his finger he wore the ring of St. Peter—a magnificent diamond, set by the cunning hand of Benvenuto Cellini.

At the back of the Holy Father's chair stood the cardinals Paca and Justiniani: the former was the companion of his long imprisonment in France: the latter, a prince by birth, was descended, on the mother's side, from the unfortunate Earl of Derwentwater. The Abbate Lucas—a man of stern countenance but supple manners, whose *morale* resembled oil floating upon vinegar—and a crowd of inferior ecclesiastics, were grouped at a distance in the background.

Sir Thomas Lawrence—whose magnificent portrait of Pius all who have visited Windsor Castle must remember—had just presented Henry Ashton to the venerable old man.

"Rise, my son," said the Pope, extending his withered hand, to prevent our hero from paying him the usual homage, by giving him his pontifical ring to kiss, instead of the embroidered crosses before alluded to, upon his slipper; "we are doubly happy to receive you—as the friend of our painter, and an Englishman: we owe much to your sovereign and country," he added, with a smile.

To the surprise of all, the young man still remained kneeling.

"He is a suppliant, Holy Father," said Sir Thomas.

The Abbate Lucas began to look uneasy, and drew nearer to the chair of the Pontiff—who, imagining that the request which the young Englishman was about to proffer related to a permission to copy some rare work of art, or equally unimportant favour, by a smile encouraged him to proceed.

"Not to your bounty, sovereign and priest," said Henry, for the first time breaking silence; that all who have the happiness of approaching your sacred person know to be inexhaustible—but to your justice."

Cardinal Paca advanced to the chair, and

whispered a few words in the ear of his friend and master.

"Proceed," said the Pope, in a low, musical tone; "the ear of justice, like that of mercy, should never be closed."

Thus encouraged, our hero began the history of the unhappy Lady Mowbray's trials and unmerited sufferings; how the devotion of her woman's heart to the husband of her youth had been used by the infamous Captain Lucas as a snare to delude her from her country and friends; the sublime act by which she preserved her honor from his licentious passion; her temporary madness, which followed the loss of her child; and the means employed to induce the bereaved mother and slandered wife to accept the veil, as a refuge from a world whose contempt she had not deserved.

Like most who plead from the heart, his feelings made him eloquent.

"The prayers of the sufferer have been heard," he added, "even from her cloistered tomb; the means to prove her innocence are not wanting; a clue to her long-lost child may still be found. One bar only exists to her restoration to her husband, her offspring, and the world: that bar, no lips less sacred than yours, Holy Father, can remove! Feel for the yearnings of a mother's love—an outraged matron's honor! pronounce the dissolution of a vow which heaven cannot approve, and the recording angel witnessed was wrung from a broken heart! Speak it," he continued, in accents which vibrated through the columned hall of the Vatican, "and thousands in that distant isle, which no longer owns your spiritual sway, shall bless the deed of mercy and of justice!"

During this impassioned address, the countenance of Pius VII. was observed to change from surprise to pity: it was evident that, as the speaker proceeded, he became deeply interested. It was some moments before he could reply to the youthful suppliant, whose eyes continued to plead, although his voice was mute.

"Rise, my son," he said, in a mild tone; "this is informal, but we pardon that. Reduce your statement of the wrongs and wishes of your unhappy countrywoman to writing—send the petition to the congregation of *rites*—and it shall receive all fitting consideration."

"It has been sent, and rejected!" replied Henry, mournfully; "the voice of her enemy is too powerful there!"

"Her enemy!" repeated the Pontiff, with surprise; "name him."

"The Abbate Lucas—of whom I have vainly sought an interview, to glean some tidings of the lost heir of Sir William Mowbray: the man, like his deeds, remains shrouded in darkness—he cannot bear the light—he is —"

An expressive sign from Cardinal Justiniani warned the speaker to proceed no further.

"Venerable father," said Sir Thomas Lawrence, who saw that the moment had arrived for him to use his influence, "I have

your gracious permission to present two visitors this morning?"

The Pope nodded assent, glad of the interruption, which, as he hoped, would relieve him from the necessity of a decision which the benevolence of his heart prompted him to give, but which he well knew would excite the discontent of the camarilla.

The painter advanced to the portals of the apartment, and, throwing them open, discovered the unhappy Lady Mowbray kneeling on the threshold, in supplication such as some pilgrim might be supposed to address at the shrine of a long-sought saint. The Duchess of Devonshire and several English ladies of the highest rank, closely veiled, were standing in a group in the antechamber.

No sooner did Henry Ashton perceive the wife of his benefactor, than, regardless of etiquette, and listening only to the impulse of his gratitude to Sir William, he hastened to raise her, and conduct her to the feet of the aged man, upon whose voice, as upon the decree of destiny, the misery or happiness of her future life depended. No other female foot ventured to pass the threshold.

"Deign, holy father," said our hero, "to cast your eyes upon the features made pale with unmerited wrongs and sufferings; convince the world that if your voice is terrible in judgments on the impious, it is rich in blessings for the innocent and the oppressed! The noblest names of England," he added, pointing to the group of ladies in the antechamber, "are the guarantees of her sufferings and virtues!"

The courtly painter, for whom the aged priest had contracted a sort of friendship, gracefully bent the knee before him.

All that the veiled suppliant herself could utter were the words—"Pity!" and "my child—my child!"

It was nature's eloquence, and that seldom pleads in vain. As the piercing accents of her voice—which seemed to come from her heart, not her lips—the last trace of irresolution vanished from the countenance of the venerable Pontiff.

He rose slowly, and with majestic gravity, from his chair. As he did so, the Abbate Lucas advanced, as if to catch his eye; but the Cardinal Justiniani, who felt deeply interested in the scene, waved him back.

"Daughter," said Pius, "search well thy heart, and answer—as we both must answer at the judgment-seat on high—hast thou any other motive than the ones alleged for desiring to be released from thy cloistered vows?"

"None!" exclaimed Lady Mowbray, clasping her hands with fervour; "none!"

"No doubt, or tampering with thy faith?"

The nun crossed herself, as if in horror at the thought.

"And thou dost acknowledge our Holy Church to be the only judge?" continued the august speaker.

"The church and its venerable head," replied the suppliant.

"What if it declares thy vow irrevocable?" demanded the old man, willing, perhaps, to try her further.

"*Fiat voluntas tuam sicut in terram ut in celum!*" was the response, given in the words of the Dominical prayer.

"Enough!" said the Pontiff, extending his hand over her. "In the plenitude of our apostolic power, we cancel the vow which binds thee to the church, and absolve thee from observing it! Let it be known unto all men," he added, slowly removing the consecrated veil from her pallid brow, "that by this our act thou art free, daughter of many sorrows, to return unto the world! The church will keep it for thee as a sacred deposit, that, should disappointment or misfortune lead thee once more to seek an asylum in its bosom, thou mayest return to it, as the suffering child returns unto its mother!"

The emotions of Lady Mowbray, thus unexpectedly restored to the world, were too powerful for words; her gratitude expressed itself in tears, as she kissed the hand of the benevolent Pontiff—the hand which had broken the seal upon her tomb, and had made her a living thing again.

"You spoke of the child of your countrywoman," continued Pius VII., addressing our hero; "to whom was it delivered?"

"To the Abbate Lucas," was the reply.

The old man glanced over the back of his chair, and, fixing a commanding look upon the oily priest, motioned him to advance.

"You hear, my son?" he calmly observed.

The Dominican bowed his head.

"To whom did you confide the infant?"

There was a pause: the priest was evidently struggling between his sense of duty, the dread of offending the head of his church, and the desire he felt of sealing the clue which he possessed to the lost heir of Sir William Mowbray.

The pale, meek countenance of the Pope became flushed with anger. For once he remembered that he was a sovereign as well as a priest—that one word from his lips could reduce the man who, by his silence, presumed to brave him, to worse than nothing—annihilate his ambitious dream of the future, by cancelling the past.

"What!" he exclaimed, "must I speak twice? am I braved? is the authority of the head of the church scorned by one of its ministers?"

"No, Holy Father!" replied the priest, in a submissive tone—for he saw that the spirit of the hitherto passive old man was roused; "far from my heart and thoughts be such impiety! To me your will must ever be a sacred law! The child of this unhappy lady, whom I knew only as a wife who had fled from her husband with my misguided relation, was consigned to the care of his uncle——"

"Uncle! Colonel Mowbray?" interrupted Henry Ashton.

"Even so."

"Here, continued the abbat," is the letter in which he authorized his messenger to receive the boy; and here is another, in which he acknowledges the safe arrival of his nephew in England."

Bending his knees, the speaker placed at the foot of the venerable Pius a small packet, containing the precious documents. It was raised by Cardinal Paca, who placed it in the hands of his master.

"Tis well!" replied the Pope in a milder tone—for his anger was quickly appeased. "The Abbat Lucas may retire to his convent: he will receive our commands through the Vicar General of the Holy See!"

Cringing to the ground, the basiled priest retreated to the door of the cabinet. As he passed the threshold, he cast a look of deadly hatred towards our hero—who replied only by an ironical smile.

The Pontiff rose from his chair—the excitement had enfeebled him—and, leaning upon the arm of the cardinal, he prepared to retire to his private apartments. All bent the knee as he passed them; upon Lady Mowbray he bestowed his benediction, and placed the packet in hands of Henry Ashton—who, struck with admiration of his character, and the sense of justice he had exhibited, demanded to share in his benediction.

"It is yours, my son!" replied the Pontiff; "the blessing of an old man cannot harm you!"

He extended his hand over the head of the youth, traced the air-drawn sign, and passed on towards Sir Thomas Lawrence, whom he touched familiarly upon the shoulder.

"No more presentations, *caro mio!*" he whispered in his ear; "or Rome will say I have turned Protestant! *Addio!*"

The heavy velvet curtains which veiled the portal leading to that part of the Vatican devoted to the privacy of the Pope, were drawn aside by the officers of the Swiss guard—who, during the scene we have endeavoured to describe, had been standing, in their picturesque costume, motionless as statues, on either side. All but Lady Mowbray, the painter, and our hero, passed through, and they saw the venerable Pius VII. no more.

The instant the *cortège* disappeared, the Duchess of Devonshire and the English ladies who were with her, passed the hitherto forbidden threshold, and, surrounding Lady Mowbray, congratulated her warmly upon her deliverance from her conventional vows, and the prospects which were opening to her.

"Alas!" faintly replied the victim of so much treachery; "it is but the last gleam of the setting sun before it sinks in night! My child," she added with a shudder, "was consigned to the hands of his cold, calculating uncle!"

"Say rather," exclaimed our hero, his face radiant with smiles, "the commencement of its glorious rising! Colonel Mowbray has not been so vile as you imagine: your boy—the heir of so much love, the

object of so many prayers and tears—lives—worthy of you and his father! ... I am sure of it! my heart cannot deceive me! Soon—very soon—I shall have the happiness of restoring him to your embrace!"

"My son!" faltered her ladyship.

"In a few days, perhaps?"

"Oh, do not trifl with me!" exclaimed the excited mother; "you know him—you have seen him?"

"He is my dearest friend," replied Henry Ashton. "I dare not say more," warned, by the pallor which suddenly overspread the countenance of the wife of his benefactor, to be cautious; "but, trust me, dearest lady, mine are not the lips that would deceive you! you will still be happy in his and your long-suffering husband's love! The sunshine of the future shall efface from your memory the gloomy shadows of the past!"

At the allusion to her husband both the Duchess of Devonshire and Sir Thomas Lawrence exchanged uneasy glances. The painter, since his first interview with the speaker, had written to England, and received such particulars of the murder of the baronet, as made it impossible for them to doubt the tragical secret.

Led, or rather supported, by her friends, Lady Mowbray was conducted to the carriage of her grace—who insisted, in the most affectionate terms, upon the much-wronged lady taking up her abode with her till her departure for England—for that land where her name was still a reproach: for all believed her guilty, not the deceived wife of the late baronet.

Henry was all impatience to return to his hotel, to impart to Walter the eventful discoveries he had made. The likeness of his friend to his benefactor had frequently struck him; the resemblance of character was even stronger than that of feature. Not a doubt existed in his own mind that the ambitious colonel had assumed the name of father instead of uncle to his brother's heir: a deception which insured him, in the event of the baronet's death, the enjoyment of the title and estates during his own worthless life. Little did he anticipate the fearful shock which was to await him on his arrival.

"I must speak with you," said the painter, seriously—at the same time placing his hand upon the arm of our hero—"upon matters of serious import!"

"Not now, Sir Thomas—not now!" replied Henry. "I am so happy in the events of this auspicious day—so anxious to impart the result to one most interested in the discovery—that I am sure you will pardon my impatience!"

"In an hour, then," replied his friend, "I will seek you at your hotel: perhaps it will be better there!"

After taking a grateful leave of the kind-hearted duchess, who had so materially assisted him in his project for restoring Lady Mowbray to the world, the young man started for his residence in the Via Condotti, eager to impart his hopes and suspicions

to the ear of one cold and insensible to the voice of friendship as of love.

CHAPTER XIII.

What prayers can move thee?
None that thou hast wit enough to offer.
SHAKSPEARE.

OUR readers have doubtless remembered that, on Meeran Hafez and Colonel Mowbray's first visit to Dr. Guyot, in the purlieu of the Almonry, they noticed the departure of a man, closely muffled up, as if to avoid recognition, from one of the inner chambers: which said personage the old Frenchman described as a pupil who was possessed of the singular desire of treating insanity, arising from one peculiar cause.

It is time that we introduced our readers to that pupil—who was no other than their old acquaintance, the Khan.

It must have been evident, from the earlier pages of our story, that the former confidant of Meeran Hafaz—whose European name was known only to himself—had in some way been connected with the events which had taken place at Carrow. He was no stranger either to the locality or its inhabitants; the crimes of Will Sideler were more than suspected by him—and we have seen how he used that knowledge to overawe the ruffian. Some hidden motive had induced him, even before Henry Ashton had preserved his life from the ferocious attempt of the warrener, to take a deep interest in his welfare: which interest would have been made apparent, perhaps in action as well as words, had he not sworn, on the night when his former pupil and Colonel Mowbray surprised him in the vault at Mortlake, never, by word, writing, or act, to betray his suspicions that the young Indian was in any way connected with the murder of the baronet.

The renegade was seated in a small apartment in the neighborhood of the abbey. The frame which formerly occupied the centre of his room, was placed near the window, the shutters of which were carefully closed. A strong light from a lamp fell upon a ghastly head fixed in the moveable socket.

Taking up a mallet, he struck a violent blow upon the skull, sufficient to fracture it.

After a careful examination of the wound, he removed, with a sharp scalpel, a portion of the scalp, till he laid bare the bone.

"Now then," he said, "for my last instrument!"

On a table near him was one of those circular saws similar to those used for the operation of trepanning—we say similar, for it differed in one important particular: by means of an exquisitely contrived mechanism, as the instrument cut through the shattered cranium, it was made to contract and grasp the fragments, so as to prevent their falling in and injuring the brain. It had cost the solitary man long years of

study and experiment to bring it to the necessary perfection.

Calmly and steadily he applied the instrument. The low, grating sound caused by the fine teeth cutting through the bone, neither jarred his nerves nor caused him the least impatience. In a few moments the operation was completed; not a particle that could injure the brain but was grasped and removed.

"At last!" murmured the old man; "at last, I have succeeded! But shall I be able to operate as successfully upon a *living subject*? Will not my hand fail me when I hear his cry of agony, and mark the quivering muscles of his wrinkled face? I am sure of my invention—can I be equally certain of myself?"

There was a gentle tap at the door. The Khan, after having ascertained, by looking through an aperture, who was his visitor, withdrew the bolt, and gave admittance to Dr. Guyot.

"Humph!" said the man of science, with an approving nod, after carefully examining his work; "you have succeeded!"

"Thanks to your instructions!"

"And your own patience," replied the doctor. "I trust you have not forgotten your promise!"

"What promise?" demanded the occupant of the chamber, with a look of surprise, for his thoughts were deeply occupied by the result of his labor.

"My promised recompense," was the reply.

The Khan opened an iron-bound casket, which was placed upon a table within reach of the cheetah's chain, and took from it a bag of gold, which he placed in the eager grasp of his visitor.

"It is paid!" he said.

"Honestly!" exclaimed the doctor, as soon as he had counted the glittering coin; "there are one or two light pieces; but, for friendship's sake, we will say nothing more about them. May you succeed!" he added, rising to depart.

"Stay!" said his pupil, sternly.

The old man turned, with an uneasy look.

"I have a question to ask," continued the speaker.

"A question?"

"Which you must answer, and honestly!" added the renegade; "for you have seen enough of me to know that I am dangerous when sported with!"

"Speak!" exclaimed his visitor, more and more puzzled.

"How fares your patient at Cromwell House?"

The question was so unexpected and so directly put, that Dr. Guyot, with all his self-possession, knew not how to lie, or conceal the embarrassment it caused him.

"What patient?" he faltered, at last.

"The victim of a false guardian's treachery, and a headstrong boy's destroying passion," replied the Khan; "the niece of the late Sir William Mowbray—Miss De Vere!"

"Better!" muttered the old man—"much better!"

"Has Meean seen her yet?"

"Not since her illness."

"Nor must he!" replied the renegade, in a firm tone. "His presence would destroy her! Listen to me," he continued; "I never frame a request till I have it in my power to change it into a command: you must find the means to release her from her prison!"

"I!" exclaimed the doctor. "You know not how it is guarded: he, the young Indian you name, and her uncle, quit it neither night nor day!"

"I guessed as much."

"The ayah, too, is on the watch!"

The Khan merely nodded, to intimate that he was aware of it.

"The servants devoted to him."

"Were she guarded by fiends," replied the renegade, "you must find the means to release her! I have not yet to learn the vast resources science has placed at your command!"

"And, if so," demanded Doctor Guyot, "why should I use them?"

"For your own safety!" answered his late pupil. "Listen to me. I told you that I never proffered a request till fortune gave me the means to change the words of entreaty to those of command!"

"You did!"

"It has done so now!" continued the Khan; "the register of your dark deeds and practices—the record of your bribes, the name of your employers—has fallen into my hands!"

With a yell of surprise and rage, the man whose wondrous skill had been perverted to such fearful purposes, rushed towards the speaker: a weapon, which he had drawn from his breast, glittered in his hand.

"Dog!" he exclaimed: "the secret shall die with you!"

The Khan started back, within reach of the chain of the hunting leopard. The animal—which, during the interview, had been crouching on the ground—with a loud growl, sprang upon the assailant. In an instant he was prostrate on his back, the animal upon his breast, withheld only by a signal from its master from tearing him to pieces.

"Fool!" said the Khan, calmly; "thinkest thou that I was not prepared for this? Now, listen to me. I will leave thee here, in the guard of my faithful cheetah, whilst I hasten to a magistrate, place in his hands the record of thy crimes, search thy polluted dwelling, and return only to see thee dragged, amid the hootings of the mob, to prison—if, indeed, their indignation permits thee to reach its friendly shelter!"

The doctor groaned aloud.

"I submit!" he said; "name thy conditions!"

They were named; and such was the precaution the renegade took to insure their observance, that even the subtle Dr. Guyot found no loophole to avoid fulfilling them.

CHAPTER XIV.

Molida saxe—

(To soften rocks.)

UNDER the skilful care of Dr. Guyot, Ellen was slowly recovering from the fever, both of heart and brain, which for several days threatened to sunder the slender thread of life. Susan's devotion to her young mistress had been incessant: the faithful girl had watched her with the affection of a sister, or the untiring love of a young mother, over the couch of her first-born child. She scarcely absented herself one single instant from her sight; every medicine which her singular physician prescribed was administered by her hand: from no other, in the height of her delirium, would she consent to receive it.

This was gall and wormwood to the jealous ayah, who saw herself supplanted in the love of her foster-child by one whom she looked upon as an intruder. She both hated and loved the girl: hated her for the affection with which Ellen repaid her kindness—and loved her for the devoted care with which she watched over the oppressed and suffering orphan.

"You are better—much better now!" whispered Susan, as she smoothed the pillow of the patient. "I shall never forgive myself for the ill opinion I conceived of that hideous Dr. Guyot, who is not half so evil as he looks: his skill has preserved your life!"

"To endure fresh misery!" answered the poor girl, with a deep-drawn sigh. "I am in the power of one whose heart knows no law but its wild, ungovernable impulse—deprived of all natural protectors—no friend save you; for even Henry has forgotten me!"

"Not forgotten you, lady!" replied her humble friend. "I could as soon doubt the goodness of heaven, as his sincerity! Those who have deluded you to this wretched place have doubtless intercepted your letters to him, and his to you."

"But not his old friend Dr. Orme's: surely he might have written to him!"

Susan suggested that the helpless prisoner should appeal to Dr. Guyot—if not for protection, at least to convey a letter to her friends.

"To him!" replied the suffering girl, with a shudder; "hopeless—hopeless! I have noted him—his cold glance, which might arrest the prayer on mercy's lips, and send the pleading angel hopelessly away! The only key to his heart is gold—and that my persecutor possesses!"

"Perhaps," uttered a deep-toned voice near them, "there is another!"

The two captives gave an involuntary scream; the subject of their discourse had entered the room during their conversation, unperceived, and stood, in his usual quiet manner, close to the side of the bed.

Ellen was the first to speak.

"Is it possible," she exclaimed, "that my sufferings have touched your heart? Can you befriend me?"

"I can!"

"And will you?"

"Humph!" muttered the old man, "that must depend on circumstances! Child," he added, turning to Susan, "descend to the offices, and see if the cooling drink I intrusted to the Indian woman to prepare, is ready."

The faithful girl hesitated; so great was the dread she entertained of this singular being, that she disliked leaving him alone with her young lady.

"What do you fear?" he added, with a bitter smile.

"Go, Susan?" said her mistress, inspired with a sudden hope; "the rock is not so hard but heaven can melt it?"

Reassured by the words of the patient, her attendant withdrew. No sooner were Ellen and the physician alone, than the latter drew a chair to the side of the bed, and, stretching forth his long, bony hand, placed his finger on her pulse.

"Still feverish!" he murmured; "still feverish?"

"Heed not that!" exclaimed the sufferer; "my mind is clear—quite clear; for it sees the horror of my desolate condition! I have no hope but you—no friend save heaven!"

"You have another friend," replied the old man.

"Another friend! name him?" eagerly demanded Ellen.

"I do not know his name."

"His country?"

"That I am equally a stranger to. He has commanded, and I obey. The task I have undertaken is dangerous, for your gaoler is one of those fiery spirits who sport with human life as the mad wave plays with the drifting-wreck; intellect with him is but an instrument to accomplish his passions—not control them.

His listener shuddered, for she knew that he alluded to Meoran Hafaz.

"This friend," continued the speaker—for he is your friend and my taskmaster—has commanded me to save you from your persecutor; but annexed a condition which is still more difficult."

"Name it—name it?"

"That I should spare him: it were easy else," he added, in an under-tone: "easy, easy! For three days I have deceived the young Indian as to your real state; he still believes that the shadow of the dark angel's wing is over you—that the slightest shock would be fatal: therefore he has abstained from visiting you."

"Persuade him so still," replied Ellen, in a tone which betrayed the terror of her soul at the mere thought of meeting Meoran, "and I will bless you; or, if there be no way of avoiding him, make your words a reality!"

"How a reality?" inquired the doctor, with a searching glance.

"By giving me the death which frees me from my persecutor."

The firm tone in which the request was made excited the mingled surprise and ad-

miration of the old man, accustomed as he was to witness, in those who came to consult his wondrous skill, the most abject dread of death—to listen to their entreaties to prolong existence at any sacrifice—at any price.

"It has not yet arrived to that necessity," he replied. "Have you confidence in me?"

Ellen hesitated; her heart beat violently.

"Foolish girl!" he continued, interpreting her doubt; "what should I gain by deceiving you? Did I wish your death, I would send it to you on the perfume of a flower, the contact of a glove; were it my will to remove you from this place, I could, for eight-and-forty hours, steep your senses in a sleep the thunder-peal would fail to break—a sleep so like to death, that not one beating of the pulse would indicate, even to the finger of science, that life still lingered in its citadel, or a breath cloud the polished mirror at your lips! The man you fear," he added, in a tone which colored her pale cheek with blushes, "would pay me nobly for such a secret!"

"Man!" she exclaimed, "I must—I will trust thee! There is little of human feeling in thy words and manner; perhaps thy heart is kinder than thy looks! I have no other hope! God will requite thee as thou dealest by me!"

"I will deal justly by thee."

"From pity?"

"No," replied Dr. Guyot; "I will not deceive thee: from necessity—that iron law which all bow—which crushes the fool who resists. I have no sympathy with humanity; it has shown none to me. I am commanded to do this by a will stronger than my own; for once I have found my master: it is his pleasure to save thee—I am but the instrument!"

This singular assertion, strange as it may appear, strengthened the confidence of the prisoner. She could believe in the speaker's being compelled, by some good genius or secret friend, to act a part so contrary to his nature; but could not trust to any of the gentler impulses of humanity influencing a character like his.

"Listen to my instructions," he resumed, lowering his voice to a whisper, as if he feared that the echoes of the old chamber should repeat his words; "to-morrow night, when all have retired, you must dress yourself in a dark mantle and veil, which I will contrive to bring with me."

"But, Susan?" interrupted the deeply attentive Ellen.

"Fear not!" said the doctor, calmly; "she shall accompany you."

Reassured by this promise, the prisoner motioned him to proceed.

"When you hear a cry like the hooting of an owl thrice repeated beneath your window, quit your chamber as silently as possible."

"Alas!" replied the unhappy girl, "every night the door is locked, and my treacherous nurse retains the key!"

The old man rose from his seat, and

walked stealthily towards the door, the fastenings of which he carefully examined. After a few moments, having convinced himself that nothing could be easier than to draw the screws, he returned to his former position.

"That shall be cared for," he said; "at the bottom of the stairs you will encounter myself and your unknown friend; leave the rest to us."

"But should my strength fail me?"

"Even that I will provide against," added the physician; "the last thing previous to quitting your chamber, drink the contents of a small phial, which you will find with the mantle and veil—and for five hours I pledge my life that neither your strength nor spirits flag, no matter how severe the fatigue you may have to undergo. Do you promise this?"

"I do—I do!"

"Remember, should the attempt fail, from any weakness or irresolution at the final moment, the fault will not be mine—I shall have done all that I can—and more than I wish, perhaps—to aid you; it is your last chance of escape from the power of your relentless persecutor!"

"And I will risk it!" replied Ellen, firmly; "though a grave yawned in my path at every step! keep but thy faith with me," she added, "and my gratitude shall rival Meoran's in his gifts; for I am rich—in the gold you love—rich in all save friends and happiness!"

"I shall remind you of your promise, young lady!" said the old man, his eyes sparkling with the anticipated pleasure of fingering the yellow idol for which he had so frequently stained his soul with crimes, "when you are free!"

"And nobly shall it be kept!"

Not wishing to excite the suspicion of Meoran, who he knew would be impatiently expecting his report, Dr. Guyot quitted the room with his usual quiet step, leaving his patient a prey to alternate hope, doubt, and fear.

When Susan descended into the gloomy old kitchen of Cromwell House, she found the ayah and Will Sideler seated on either side of the vast grate, upon which a small vessel, containing herbs and drugs, was simmering. The warrener, who had nearly recovered from the severe injuries he had received at the hands of Meoran, regarded her with a sullen scowl—Zara with calm indifference; jealous as she felt of the hold which the girl's fidelity and sympathy had obtained on the confidence and affection of her foster-child, she could not hate her; despite the waywardness of her disposition, she could but feel that the love she herself had forfeited was justly bestowed.

She slowly rose to leave the place.

"Do not leave me with that fearful man I' said the warm-hearted girl, all her former terrors returning at the sight of the warrener.

"You need not fear me," replied the warrener, "yet!" he added, in an undertone; for he had made up his mind to the

completion of the revenge which, in the evil recesses of his heart, he harbored against her lover.

The ayah caught the ferocious glance of his eye, and, with a mute gesture, motioned to him to quit the room.

"I am very well here!" he said.

"Here," she answered calmly, "you must not remain! What!" she exclaimed, seeing that he hesitated to obey her; "has not the hound been sufficiently chastised? Does he again require the lash, to teach him obedience to his master?"

Sideler quitted his seat, and limped towards the door, to which the Indian woman pointed.

"Know," continued the speaker, "that there are instruments which we use, but scorn! Dare to set a foot athwart the threshold whilst the girl remains, and thy second punishment shall exceed the first! Thou art in the hands of one who pardons not twice!"

At the allusion to Meoran, the ruffian quailed: he had already felt the strength of his hand, and he felt cowed at the recollection, like some ferocious beast of prey who has found its master. Bitterly did he regret, as he left the kitchen, that he had ever placed himself within his power. True, the conception of the crime was mutual, but the execution had been wholly his; besides, he had none but moral proofs of the young Indian's complicity.

Relieved by the absence of her enemy, Susan began to busy herself with her task at the fire. She had not been long thus occupied, before a slight tapping at the grated window attracted her attention: turning round, she beheld Red Ralph nodding and grinning at her through the diamond-shaped panes of glass. She remembered the poor cow-boy's kindness, and smiled upon him in return.

"Is 'ee quite alone?" he whispered.

"Quite," she replied.

"Fasten the door, then, and I'll come in."

The quick-witted girl, naturally suspecting that it was not without some motive that the lad had ventured back, hastily drew the bolt across the door leading from the kitchen to the offices, and then returned to the window, where Red Ralph was busily occupied in removing the iron bars, from which age had long since rotted the wood-work. Some one was assisting him: she looked closer—and could scarcely suppress a scream of joy as she recognized in his companion her faithful lover, Joe Beans.

The sight of poor Susan's emotion lent fresh energy to the arm of the young man. In a few minutes an aperture sufficiently wide was made for him and Ralph to pass through; and the next he clasped her, laughing and crying, to his breast.

"Oh, Joe—Joe!" she sobbed; "I never thought to have seen you more! You cannot imagine what I and Miss Ellen have suffered from the persecution of our enemies!"

Her lover kissed away her tears, assuring

her that her sorrows were at end. As he pressed his lips to her pale cheek, the cowboy, whose delight at the scene knew no bounds, exclaimed :

"Ah, that be just what old un wanted to do! but she wouldn't let un!"

"Old un!" repeated Joe, fixing an inquiring glance upon his sweetheart; "who does he mean?"

With a shudder, Susan whispered in his ear the name of the warrener.

"Curse him!" exclaimed her lover; "I never liked the fellow; but, since he has insulted you, I feel that I hate him! Let him but once stand within my grasp again," he added, "and I'll spare the hangman a cast of his office—almost too good for such a villain—and strangle him! Where is the ruffian?"

"Hush!" whispered the girl, laying her finger impressively upon her lips, "he is not alone!"

"No matter!"

"Meeran Hafaz and the colonel are both here; the servants, bribed by the gold of the former, are devoted to them. Miss Ellen only escaped his violence by a fever which threatened her life, by madness, produced at the sight of him: they will murder you!"

"Villain, villain!" muttered Joe, "would to heaven Master Harry were here! No matter," he added; "Lawyer Elworthy has written to Dr. Orme—and since we have found out where the kernel is concealed, we will very soon crack the shell!"

Red Ralph, who, during the latter part of their discourse had been listening at the door, distinctly heard a heavy step carefully retreating along the passage. Walking up to Joe, whose liberality and courage had gained his confidence, he observed to him that it was time to be off.

"Off!" repeated our honest friend; "think you that I will leave the girl of my heart in such a den of infamy?"

The voice of Meeran Hafaz was now distinctly heard in the great hall, calling for lights and Colonel Mowbray. There was no time for flight. The cowboy, whose presence of mind—now that he was assured by ocular proof that the ayah was mortal like himself, for he had seen her through the window—did not desert him, at once closed the casement and shutters of the kitchen window, to hide the removal of the bars; and, pointing to a large pile of faggots, which had been brought into the place for domestic purposes, gave an illustration of his advice, by concealing himself.

It was not until he had stolen another kiss, that Joe followed his example.

"Be firm!" he said; "if any harm should threaten you, remember that I am here to defend you!"

There was a tapping at the door: collecting her self-possession as well as she was able, the agitated girl proceeded to open it. The intruder proved to be Dr. Guyot. The old man entered the kitchen, carefully drawing the bolt after him.

"You have some one concealed here?" he observed, in his usual quiet tone of voice.

"Concealed, ridiculous! who should —?"

"Don't attempt to deny it!" he said, interrupting her; "I know the exact value of words! The warrener heard voices in the kitchen: he has alarmed his employer, who is coming, with Colonel Mowbray and the servants, to search the place. Be firm!" he added: "I will preserve you!"

"You!" exclaimed the astonished Susan, who trembled for the safety of her lover far more than for her own.

"I!" repeated the old man, "strange as it may appear to you, I am your friend: do as I direct, and we shall baffle their suspicions!"

In a few moments there was a loud clamor at the door, and the voices of Meeran Hafaz and the colonel were heard, demanding admission.

"You tremble!" said the physician; "I will answer them."

With his usual calm air, he proceeded to draw the bolt, and admit the impatient intruders; then, as if their visit was a matter of the most perfect indifference to him, he walked slowly towards the table, where Susan was holding a glass tube, through which the decoction of herbs and drugs was slowly passing into a larger vessel.

"Dr. Guyot!" exclaimed his disappointed employer.

"Yes; whom did you expect to find?" replied the old man, calmly. Turning to the poor girl, whose hand trembled with terror, he added, in a tone of reproof: "if the liquid is too warm, wrap your handkerchief round the tube. Pretty laboratory for a chemist: not a still in the place!"

"Sideler informs us —"

"Pray, colonel, do not interrupt me!" observed the physician, petulantly; "the mixture is a most delicate preparation, and requires all the appliances and means of art: in a few minutes I will attend to you and your friend."

All this was uttered in so natural a tone, that it disarmed even the suspicions of Meeran. How could he suspect that the man whose only god seemed to be gold—whose avarice he had glutted with his gifts—could be brought by a poor, friendless girl to conspire against him?

"The warrener declares he overheard voices in the room," he observed, as the man of science, satisfied that Susan had to a certain extent recovered her self-possession, relinquished the task of superintending the decoction to her care.

"Not unlikely," replied the old man; "does the fool imagine that I and the girl converse by signs?"

"If I thought that you were playing us false!" exclaimed the colonel, with a threatening look.

"Bah!" interrupted Dr. Guyot: "big words cannot frighten me! My fidelity, like your honor, is a purchaseable commodity! Find me any one to pay my

price, and I would sell you both with as little remorse as you would leave me to starve, if you had no further occasion for my services; but not till you have found such a one!" he added, with a sneer.

"He is right!" said the young Indian, perfectly assured that no pecuniary temptation could induce the speaker to betray him; for who possessed either the inclination or the means to pay the old man as he paid him? "It was but the jealous suspicion of you fool!" he added, pointing to Will Sideler, who, confounded, but not convinced, sneaked out of the kitchen. "We will leave you," continued the speaker, "to your task."

"It will soon be ended," replied the man of science; "as soon as I have taken it to my patient, whose progress under my care is the best answer for my fidelity, I will descend."

The intruders, perfectly deceived by the self-possession of the doctor, left the room. As the last echo of their footsteps died in the long oaken passage, he bade Susan once more fasten the door: she did so.

"And now," he said, pointing to the pile of faggots, "you may release your friends."

Joe Beans and his companion needed no second invitation to advance from their uncomfortable position.

"Away with you!" said the old man, "before your presence is discovered, and wait for me at the corner of the lane. I shall not be long before I rejoin you; like you, my object here is to procure the release of Miss De Vere."

After the proof he had given of his goodwill, it would have been more than suspicious to doubt his sincerity; so Joe and the cowboy left the house, determined, however, to return, if the singular personage failed to keep his promise.

CHAPTER XV.

He knew not there were hearts whose nerves,
Like tempered steel, bend with the blast;
Hearts which oppression only serves
To strengthen when the storm is past.

WHEN the artful superior of the Benedictines, at the command of the venerable pontiff, acknowledged that the infant son of the unhappy Lady Mowbray had been consigned to the care of his unprincipled uncle, the heart of our hero bounded with joy; for he felt assured that the long-lost heir of his benefactor could be no other than the generous, noble-hearted Walter, whose virtues endeared him to all who knew him, and rendered him every way worthy of such a parent as Sir William.

There are beings so antagonistic in their natures, feelings, and sympathies, that when they encounter, even if they fail to offend, are certain to repel: such was the case with Henry Ashton and the colonel. Although the youth had seen but little of the selfish man of the world, that little had anything but prepossessed him in his favor. He had contrasted his cold, calculating manner and hearty bearing

with the warm heart, ingenuous frankness, and manly qualities of his supposed son, and frequently found himself regretting that the friend he loved should owe his being to such a father.

We need not remind our readers that Colonel Mowbray honored the *protégé* of his brother with a feeling stronger than dislike—with positive hatred—not, however, unmixed with fear; for there was something in his reckless courage and determined spirit which alarmed him.

The conviction—the truth of which his sanguine temperament did not permit him for an instant to doubt—that Walter was the long-sought heir of the baronet, relieved the mind of our hero from a bitter reflection which frequently had crossed it: namely, that if he succeeded in discovering the object of his search in Italy—his success would be the means of depriving his friend of the fortune and honors he was every way worthy to bear.

Oh, how he longed to see him pressed to his outraged mother's heart—to say to his benefactor, "Behold your son—worthy of the name he bears—worthy even of you!" Ellen, too—he pictured how her sunny smile would reward him.

There is no happiness so exquisite to a grateful mind as the pleasure of requiring the benefits it has received—of proving that the seeds of kindness have not been sown in a barren soil—of pouring balm on the bruised heart—of recalling the long-banished smile to the pale lips of those who have befriended us in the arduous struggles of life.

So great was the impatience of Henry Ashton to behold his friend—to grasp him by the hand—to impart to him his convictions and hopes—that he disregarded the landlord of the hotel, who, with a countenance full of dismay and terror, stood in the courtyard to intercept him, fearing that the unexpected, cruel sight of Walter's body might upset his reason; for he had observed, in common with all his household, the devoted friendship existing between his guests.

"Stay, signor!" he exclaimed.

"Not now, my good fellow—not now!" replied our hero.

"I must speak to you!" said the man. "for the love of the saints ——" Then, recollecting that the *Inglesi* was a heretic, and that such an invocation was little likely to restrain him, he added: "for the love of your friend, pray hear me!"

"For the love of my friend!" repeated Henry, descending the stairs, which he had partially mounted; "in the name of heaven, what has happened?"

"Shocking! horrible! I would not that such a thing should have taken place in my house for the revenue of a chanon! I have received notice to quit from two familiars already!"

Struck by the pale features, and still more so by the words of the speaker, the youth felt a sickening sensation at his heart—a presentiment that the intelligence he

was about to hear would destroy the joyous hope which lately animated it.

"Is Walter worse?" he demanded.

"Worse than that, signor—worse than that!"

"Do not trifle with me—for pity's sake, do not trifle with me! You do not mean that he is—No—no! heaven is not so pitiless!"

Before the landlord could reply to him, Father O'Hara entered the courtyard. He had heard of the fearful crime which had been committed, and came, urged by sympathy for sorrow, to offer consolation. Taking Henry by the arm, he led him, unresisting as a child, into the saloon, and pointed to a chair, taking care to seat himself between the door of his bed-room and his countryman.

"What have I to learn?" exclaimed the latter; "something terrible—for there is a tear upon your cheek, a sympathy in your voice and manner, forewarning me that something has occurred to Walter—something which—"'

He could proceed no further. The heart of the young man was full—grief choked his utterance.

"Requires the soul's stern quality, fortitude, to bear," replied the priest; "your friend is dead: earth has one noble spirit less—heaven an inmate more!"

"Dead!" faltered Henry; "and I left him full of returning health and confidence: hope in his eye, a smile upon his lips—dreams of a happy future in—and now—"

The bereaved friend buried his convulsed features in his hands, to hide the tears which honored, not disgraced, his manhood. The blow was doubly terrible, from being unexpected—falling at the instant of so much promised happiness. His soul seemed crushed—his very self annihilated. His companion remained gazing upon him for several minutes in silence. He rejoiced at the sight of his tears, for he knew, by sad experience, how they relieve the o'erfraught heart.

"I know," he resumed, "how deep is the wound inflicted by the loss of those we love—the strong agony which follows the sundering of old, familiar ties; how we miss the grasp of manly friendship—its pure confidence and gushing sympathies: it is terrible—but doubly terrible, when violence despoils the seat of life!"

"Violence!" exclaimed Henry, starting from his lethargy of grief; "you do not mean that any ruffian hand again has—No—no—it is too horrible; you cannot mean that?"

O'Hara's countenance expressed the fearful intelligence his tongue refused to utter.

"God!" continued our hero, with a sudden burst of passion; "and I not by to save or to avenge him! Name me the villain, father? give me the finest clue, and fear not but I will find him! Earth shall not bind him from my reach, or power shield him from my hand! I'll hunt the impitiating monster through the world!"

"Does no secret whispering point out

the assassin's name?" demanded the old man.

"No!"

"Had your friend no enemy?"

"None!" replied Henry, with passionate sorrow. "He was all gentleness and virtue! A fiend could not have hated one so pure and unoffending! Stay!" he added, as he suddenly recollected his attachment to the beautiful Therese, and the reputed character of her father—a man no less proud than vicious; "the shadow becomes more palpable—its hideous outline distinct—its features terribly deformed: the Prince Colonna!"

"The Prince Colonna, my son!" repeated the monk, in accents of surprise; "what motive could possibly prompt his highness to such an act? No—the author of your misery is our countryman—a wretch who, under the garb of friendship, has glided like a serpent into your confidence, to sting you to the soul!"

"His name—his name?" impatiently demanded the young man.

"Martingale," replied the Capucin.

Henry stood for an instant as one thunderstruck, so unexpected was the blow. True, he had at times entertained vague suspicions of the plausible agent of Meeran, which, with the generous feelings of an ingenuous mind, he had dismissed as soon framed, mentally accusing himself of injustice and precipitation in his judgment.

"Fool?" he murmured; "fool? to have been caught in such a springe! A child might have seen through it!"

He was about to leave the room, with that calm air of determination in his looks which is more terrible than the wildest passion—for it denotes the settled purpose of the soul—impassible to danger, prayers, or tears.

"Where go you?" said the priest, laying his hand upon his arm.

"To place my heel upon the serpent's neck, and crush it!" answered the youth, in a tone so passionless that O'Hara shuddered as he heard it.

"Stay!" he said.

"Stay!" iterated Henry, scornfully; "when every instant of delay appears like treason unto manhood as to friendship, when the murderer's step pollutes the earth with its unholy tread! No, Walter—no!" he added, apostrophising his deceased friend; "if I could not save, I will at least avenge you: the heart's blood of the assassin should precede friendship's tears!"

"My son," said O'Hara, seriously, "he is where the hand of justice alone may strike him!"

"Dead!"

"No—in the dungeon of the Holy Inquisition."

"I must see him!" murmured the young man, gloomily—for he felt a secret disappointment at the thought of Walter's death being avenged by any hand save his. The interference of justice between himself and the assassin appeared like robbing him of

the ministry to which friendship had consecrated him.

His benevolent visitor proceeded as gently as possible to relate to him the terrible details of Walter's death, which he had learnt from the landlord and waiter of the hotel—the visit of the agent of the secret police—the attempt upon the desk—the detection, and crowning tragedy. As the scenes of Martingale's treachery and Walter's devotion were unrolled before him, the heart of the listener swelled by turns with rage, or melted with the tenderest pity. As the priest described the blows, and the effect which followed them, his lips quivered with rage, and he started convulsively from his seat, to pace the floor of the saloon with hurried steps.

"Time!" exclaimed the youth, in answer to O'Hara's observation on its soothing influence; "can it restore my friend? It may deaden the agony of the wound his loss inflicted, but never heal it! His mind was as a mirror, in which virtue saw reflected her own image—no selfish feeling or ungenerous thought e'er sullied it; his heart, the seat of truth, beating to honor's impulse! I was ennobled in his friendship—it was my moral strength," he added; "for reason assured me such a man could not bestow it on the mean or worthless!"

"Such a man," said the Capucin, willing to draw his mind from dwelling too much upon his loss, "must have been worthy alike of man's regard and heaven's. He is less to be pitied than his assassin!"

"Curse him!" interrupted Henry fiercely; "curse him!"

The priest was inexpressibly shocked.

"And who gave man," he said, in a reprobating tone, "the right to curse his fellow-man? Think you it is no punishment for the assassin to know that every breath he draws is numbered by the passionless decree of justice, whose iron hand is conducting him to an ignominious death—to feel that, whilst every pulse is beating with healthful life, his grave is already dug—to hear his own passing-bell tolling the earth-worm to his banquet? Picture the wretch in his lone cell—the fever of excitement past, sleepless and wretched—counting the hours, the minutes allotted him to breathe! Picture his despair, his terror, and remorse! No, my son!" he added, "society may have the right to punish, but it has none to curse the murderer."

"You are right," replied our hero, in a more subdued tone; "but it is hard to school the mind to Reason's lessons, when every pulse throbs with the agony of the heart's wound! I am calm," he added, "quite calm. Leave me now, and bear with you my thanks for the sympathy you have shown, when sympathy was most welcome."

"Before I leave," said the friendly Capucin, "let me perform my errand: he—the wretched man who, in the prison of the Holy Office, waits his doom—requests to see you."

"To see me!" repeated the astonished

youth, with a shudder of disgust; "what can the ruffian hope from such an interview?"

"Nothing," answered O'Hara: "he seems like one whom hope and fear have alike deserted. He is calm and sullen as the pause which precedes the bursting of the thunder-cloud. To the interrogation of the judges he has remained obstinately silent. All that can be extorted from him is, 'Where is the Signor Ashton?'"

"I will see him!" exclaimed our hero, after a moment's reflection. "Hard as the task will be, I must endure it!"

"To morrow, after the examination?"

Henry nodded assent, and inquired at what hour the members of the Holy Office met.

"At ten," answered the priest; "by mid-day you may visit him."

So saying he left the room, and the young man was left to his own bitter reflections.

To the sensitive, grateful disposition of our hero, the blow was doubly terrible—terrible to his heart from the friendship he bore to Walter, and the disappointment of his hopes. He had anticipated the happiness of presenting to his benefactor his long-sought son, in the person of his friend—of bidding the bereaved mother's heart again rejoice: and now the promised joy was dashed aside at the moment of fulfilment.

"And this is life!" he murmured; "its lessons from the cradle to the grave, are but one tissue of pain and sorrow! One by one the brilliant hues which colour the landscape disappear, the flowers fade, the foliage withers, and the barren trunks and branches alone remain! Wisely is it ordained that the blight should be gradual; when it falls at once, the heart withers with them!"

He felt that he had still a duty to perform. With a slow step he advanced towards the door of Walter's chamber—his hand trembled as it rested upon the lock. With an effort he opened it, and stood in presence of the dead.

He who has gazed upon the dead,
Ere the last trace of life has fled;
Ere yet decay's effacing fingers,
Have swept the lines where beauty lingers.

At the sight of the pale, calm features of Walter Mowbray, the tears of Henry Ashton flowed afresh. So true—so good—so worthy of the most sacred name which man can give to man—the name of friend!

There are sorrows which are profaned by being gazed upon—which language is powerless to describe: over such we draw the veil. Those who have mourned can feel them—to those whose feelings the iron hand of grief has never wrung, no description could paint them.

CHAPTER XVI.

Who goes there?

Friends to this ground, and liegemen to the Dane.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE night at last arrived on which Dr. Guyot had arranged with Joe Beans to attempt the rescue of Ellen: an undertaking of no small difficulty and danger, when it is remembered that Meeran Hafaz and his servants had taken up their abode in Cromwell House ever since the illness of the orphan.

The ayah, too, was continually upon the watch. Her eyes were everywhere—her ears addressed to every sound; not a word or look could escape her. Despite her devotion to the young Indian, she was unhappy. Grief at the estrangement of her foster-child, and remorse at the treachery she had been guilty of, were struggling in her breast with the fidelity she had vowed to Meeran. A word would have confirmed the wavering purpose of her heart. Unfortunately, Ellen was too confident in the efforts of her friends—to mistrustful of her influence with her former favourite—to speak it.

The night was dark, and suited to the attempt. At the hour of midnight, Joe, accompanied by Red Ralph—who, since he had ascertained the ayah to be a thing of life—a being with muscles and sinews like his own—had recovered his former confidence—was at the place of rendezvous appointed by the doctor. It was the trunk of a blasted oak, at the entrance of the lane which led to the house. At a short distance, Lawyer Elworthy was waiting with a carriage, to receive them.

They had waited for some time, in silent expectation of their confederate: not a sound was to be heard, except the whistling of the wind, broken, in its career, against the chimneys and quaint old gables of the mansion, or the rustling of the leaves, with which the icy breath of winter had strewed the pathway.

"Whist!" said the lad, in a low tone; "there be some one coming!"

Joe listened, but could not detect the sound of a footfall. Ralph, however, persisted that he was not mistaken.

"I think it be an old man!" he said; "it do fall so careful, loike!"

A few moments proved that he was right; for a light from a dark lantern was suddenly turned upon them, and they recognized Dr. Guyot.

"Humph!" said the old man, "you are punctual! Is everything prepared?"

"It is!" replied the young man: "Lawyer Elworthy and the carriage are at a short distance."

"Tis well!" continued the physician; "I will return to the house, where I fear my absence may be every moment suspected—for the Indian woman is evidently upon the watch: I have noted her eye following my every action—her ear listening to every word. She is dangerous," he added—"very dangerous!" would I had thought of some means of removing her!

"Why didn't 'ee?" demanded the young man.

The party to whom the question was addressed replied only by a shrug: Joe, in the simple honesty of his heart, little understood what the doctor really meant by removing her.

"You say that you can obtain entrance to the house?" he observed.

"Leave that to me, master!" answered the boy; "they mun bar more than doors and windows, if they expect to keep me out."

It was finally arranged that the man of science should return to the house, and that in ten minutes his two confederates were to be at their posts in the great hall.

As the hour of her expected deliverance from the captivity in which she had been so infamously detained drew nigh, Ellen became excited and agitated by alternate hopes and fears. A hundred times during the day she had asked herself the question whether the physician was really to be trusted—if his sympathy might not be a deep-laid scheme to remove her from the society of her only remaining friend—to separate her from Susan, and conduct her to some retreat yet more remote, where Meeran and her unworthy guardian could more securely carry out their design against her happiness and peace.

"Trust him, lady!" said her humble friend; "he cannot be so vile as to act the part you dread! The snow of age is on his brow—his steps already totter on the verge of the grave: he must have the fear of offending that Being who will one day judge him, before his eyes! All will go well!"

With these and similar reasons, the speaker endeavored to reassure her. The resolution of her young mistress was balanced between alternate doubts and fears, when the subject of their conversation entered her chamber, with his usual stealthy step.

"Where is the ayah?" he demanded.

"Below," answered Susan.

"And her employer?" added the old man.

"In the library, with Colonel Mowbray," continued the girl. "As for the warrener, there is little fear of his interfering with our project: he has been complaining all day that his pains are greater than ever; he can scarcely raise a limb from his pallet."

Dr. Guyot smiled: he perfectly comprehended the reason why Will Sidefer was not likely to interrupt his design. He would have taken similar precautions with the ayah; but, from the peculiar habits of the woman—who was a strict adherent of the Hindoo faith, and would consequently touch no food unless prepared by her own hands—he had no opportunity of carrying out his intention.

"No time is to be lost, young lady!" he said; "the moment has arrived in which you will require decision and energy. Your friends are already at their post."

The orphan fixed her eyes with a searching glance upon him, as if to read his very heart. The old man met her gaze with his usual impassibility of countenance : he read her thought, without feeling either surprised or offended by it—to him virtue and vice were but names. Had his interests prompted him, he would have betrayed the persecuted girl to her oppressor with the same willingness that he was prepared to save her.

" You doubt me, young lady ? " he observed ; " it is natural ; for there are few in this world ready to assist the helpless—and service proffered for service' sake is seldom welcome. I told you that I was prompted to the step I have taken by one of your friends."

" You did ; his name ? "

" He is one of those men who make themselves known by actions, not names ; but I can give you those of two who even now are anxiously counting the moments of your indecision."

" Do so ! " said Ellen, eagerly—for her mind was terribly agitated with fears of the prudence of the step she was to take.

" Lawyer Elworthy is waiting at a short distance, with the means of flight."

At the name of the agent of her late uncle, the eyes of the captive sparkled with pleasure—it was one doubt removed.

" And a simple fellow—Joe Beans, I think they call him"—continued the physician, " is even now concealed within the house, to protect your flight."

At the name of Henry's friend, the last hesitation vanished. It was like mistrusting Henry himself, to doubt the fidelity of one for whom he had vouch'd. Susan's confidence at the name of her lover was unbounded ; she already in anticipation saw herself and mistress at liberty.

Dr. Guyot advanced to the table, and began to prepare a draught, the effect of which he knew, by long experience, would be to give temporary strength and nerve to his still feeble patient. When he had duly mixed it, he advanced to the bed-side of the orphan, and presented the glass.

" Drink ! " he said ; " and, for an hour at least, your cheek shall glow with the rich hue of health—the blood run freely in your veins ! there is strength and liberty in the draught ! "

Without daring to give herself a moment for reflection, Ellen drained the glass.

" 'Tis done ! " she said, as she returned it to his hand.

" Prepare your mistress," said the old man, addressing Susan ; " I shall soon be back."

So saying, without casting a second look towards the bed, he left the room.

When he returned, he found the young lady and her attendant ready for their departure. The eye of the former was bright and firm, and her whole air evinced a determination which augured favorably for the result of their enterprise. Both the females, according to his directions, were clothed in dark dresses.

" Are you ready ? " he demanded.

Susan answered in the affirmative, and immediately extinguished the light. With slow and cautious steps they descended the great oaken staircase. How their hearts trembled as the stairs creaked, like sentinels upon the watch, beneath their steps ! It seemed an age till they reached the hall, which was faintly illuminated by the light of a single lamp, suspended from the ceiling.

The instant they made their appearance, two figures emerged from the recess formed under the staircase : they were Joe Beans and his guide, Red Ralph. To avoid giving the least alarm, they had removed their shoes, and they glided like shadows over the stone floor to meet the fugitives.

Susan could scarcely repress an exclamation of delight, as she recognized the manly form of her lover. All danger seemed to vanish at his presence : she knew his strength, and the calm, steady courage of his heart. Joe's joy was scarcely second to her own ; he contented himself, however, with silently pressing her hand, and then proffered the support of his arm to Ellen, who took it with a satisfaction only to be exceeded by that with which she would have reposed upon Henry's.

For an instant there was a pause in their proceedings : it was ended by Ralph, who was to act as pioneer, crouching upon the ground, and running like a dog, upon his hands and knees. As they passed the door of the library, Ellen recognized, with a shudder, the voice of her persecutor, in loud conversation with her unworthy uncle.

As we before observed, the great gates of Cromwell House were kept locked by day as well as night, and the keys never permitted for an instant from the custody either of the colonel or the young Indian. Their only mode of egress, therefore, was by the offices—to reach which it was necessary to pass through the kitchen.

They had advanced a certain distance along the passage between the great hall and that part of the mansion devoted to the domestics, when Ralph returned, and whispered a few hasty words in the ear of Joe Beans, who instantly arrested his steps.

" What does he say ? " inquired the doctor, in an undertone.

" The warrener is in the kitchen," said the young man.

" Any one else ? "

" No ! "

" Leave me to deal with him ! " said the old man, with an air of determination ; " better him than the ayah."

Joe thought so, too.

" Will you require assistance ? " he said.

" No. Science is far more sure than strength : it can arm the air with pestilence, and make the breath of heaven the instrument of death. Not that I think," he added, with a pause, " that his death is necessary."

" If it prove so, do not hesitate—for he has merited it by a thousand villanies ;

there is scarcely a crime of which he is not capable : you would but forestall the lagard hand of justice."

"When you hear me whistle," said the physician, without any direct reply, "enter the room boldly ! I will answer for the result!"

So saying, he raised the latch, and entered the room, carefully closing the door after him.

Will Sideler was seated by the fire ; his countenance betrayed the agony he was enduring. The muscles of his cheeks quivered, and played with a nervous, spasmodic affection, which his closely-pressed lips showed he was endeavoring to suppress.

"Imprudent!" said Dr. Guyot, as he entered the room ; "why have you left your chamber?"

"Because I cannot bear to be alone!" replied the wretch ; "my pains increase with solitude!"

"I can soothe them!" replied the old man ; "here is a balm which never fails to procure the sufferer nature's best boon—refreshing sleep."

He drew from his pocket a small phial as he spoke, and, taking up a glass from the table, would have emptied the contents, had not the impatient exclamation of the warrener interrupted him.

"I don't want to sleep!" he said, in a surly tone. "I won't sleep, for then I dream—and dreams torture me more than the agony of my bruised limbs! You are a wise man, and know many curious secrets," he added ; "have you no medicine which will procure repose without those hateful dreams?"

"No!"

"I'll pay you for it well!"

"Art has no such secret," replied Guyot ; "some dreams are the images of our past crimes, reflected in the mirror where the soul sees itself reflected. They are either bright or dark, as our crimes or virtues make us."

The only answer of the warrener was a fierce scowl.

Every moment was precious, and the physician was not a man to risk his safety by trifling with it ; for he knew that the scheme once frustrated, and his share in it made known, all future attempts would be hopeless—to say nothing of the risk he would run from the vengeance of Meeran Hafez.

Hastily changing the phial for a packet, which he drew from his capacious pocket, he cast the latter upon the red embers of the wood fire burning in the grâte. A dense white vapor followed the burning of the drug. Will Sideler no sooner inhaled the odour, than he sank back in his chair, like a man suddenly seized by asphyxia.

At the same instant the doctor gave a low whistle.

It was horrible to mark the convulsive efforts which the ruffian made to overcome the effect of the vapor, when he saw Ellen and her companions pass with noiseless steps through the kitchen ; but the drug

was too strong for him, and he sank back, with groans of rage and disappointment.

"Thank heaven!" exclaimed the orphan, as she breathed the fresh air ; "we have escaped!"

Scarcely had the words passed her, when a loud cry, which she recognized as the ayah's, startled her. The Indian woman, who had been lurking about the grounds, had heard the incautious speech of her foster-child.

"Now, then," said Joe, "for your lives—your lives!"

Urged by terror, the party directed their steps towards the little door, half buried in ivy, in the walls. Ralph, who carried the key, had already opened it, when Zara sprang forward, and, throwing her arms around the orphan, attempted by violence to detain her.

"Let me pass!" said Ellen, firmly.

"Never!" replied the nurse. "I have told you that you attempt in vain to fly from your fate—it is written in the characters which never lie!"

Joe Beans cared but little for the prediction of the speaker. Seizing her by the waist, he vainly attempted to drag her from his charge—but she resisted him with a strength and tenacity which baffled all his efforts. Bitterly did Dr. Guyot, who stood gazing on the scene, regret that he had wasted upon the warrener the means of silencing her.

The shrieks of the ayah were piercing, and it became evident that the inmates of the house were alarmed, for lights were seen moving in every direction.

"What you do," he said to Joe, who was terribly embarrassed how to act, "must be done quickly!"

"Save me!" exclaimed Ellen, exhausted by her struggles ; "save me for the sake of your friend—of Henry! Save me!" she added, in a yet more desperate tone, "or kill me here!"

At the name of the companion of his youth, the young man, with dogged resolution, drew a pistol from his vest, and, placing the barrel close to the temples of the ayah, commanded her to release her hold.

"Fire!" replied Zara, calmly ; "in the grasp of death I'll hold her fast!"

Rendered desperate by the sound of Meeran's voice, which he heard calling upon the domestics to follow him, Joe placed his finger upon the trigger of his weapon.

"Fire!" said the doctor.

"God forgive us both!" exclaimed the poor fellow, his countenance pale with terror at the awful resolution he had taken. "It be your own fault—all your own fault!"

A loud explosion followed ; but at the very instant it took place, Ellen, with a convulsive movement of her hand, had dashed the barrel of the pistol aside. She could not endure to see the guilty creature, whom she had once so fondly loved, perish at her feet—to feel her warm blood cover her shuddering limbs.

"No—no!" she said; "my life—mine! Bad as she is, I cannot see her die!"

That which the menace of instant death could not effect, the words of the orphan produced in an instant. Zara relinquished her hold, like one who has been suddenly paralyzed. Her iron nature was melted at the generous devotion of her foster-child. Her relenting, unfortunately, was too late. The effect of the wondrous draught of the physician was not proof against the shock which the victim of so much tyranny had received, and she fell into the arms of Susan, nerveless and hopeless.

Not an instant was to be lost. Joe caught her in his arms, and, darting through the door, ran down the avenue, followed by his three companions. As he reached the bottom of the avenue, Meeran overtook him. Fortunately he was unarmed.

"Villain!" exclaimed the young Indian, springing towards our honest rustic; "resign your burthen!"

"Villain to your teeth!" replied Joe, placing Ellen upon the sward, and preparing, with the last drop of his blood, to defend her. "I never yet shrank from man, and am not going to show the white feather now!"

Long and fearful was the struggle which ensued. Both were in the prime of life, with hearts and energies unbroken. Twice Meeran got his deadly grip upon the throat of his antagonist; and twice, with a desperate effort, the young man tore it from him; but he felt that his strength was failing.

"Coward!" he muttered, between his set teeth.

Again the contest was renewed, and it must have ended fatally for the lover of the pretty Susan, if Dr. Guyot, Ralph, and the faithful girl had not arrived at the very moment when his breath was getting shorter, and his eyesight waxing dim. Without a word, the old man knelt upon the grass beside the combatants, and pressed his long, lean, bony fingers upon the temporal arteries of the young Indian, who, after an ineffectual struggle, gradually relaxed his hold.

"Just in time!" said the physician, with a chuckle; "just in time!"

A hasty kiss assured Susan that, however exhausted, her lover was uninjured; but the danger to the party was not over yet—for Colonel Mowbray, with several servants bearing torches, were fast approaching down the avenue.

"Where is Miss Ellen?" exclaimed Joe, looking round him. "Gone—gone! No matter! I'll return to the house," he added, with dogged resolution, "and have her out of that infernal den, or leave my bones there!"

"She bean't there!" interrupted Ralph, who, with catlike alacrity, had mounted into a tree during the contest.

"Where, then?"

"Carriage comed up, and a gentleman got out, took the young woman up in his arms, and rode off."

"Saved!" said Joe, joyfully; "thank heaven, Elworthy has been upon the watch!"

So assured did he feel that such was the case, that he took Susan by the arm, and commenced his retreat towards the King's Arms. Guyot lingered behind till he was overtaken by the colonel.

"Villain!" said the latter.

The old man replied only by a contemptuous smile: it was Meeran Hafaz that he feared; he laboured under no alarm at the wrath of his confederate.

"Where is my niece?" continued her unworthy guardian.

"Probably with those whose society, colonel, she prefers to yours! Nay, do not frown, or affect big words—I know their value! The young lady has escaped your snares: your employer has missed his bride, and you your recompense!"

So saying, he turned upon his heel, and continued his way. The baffled man of the world hesitated for an instant whether he should follow him or not: reflection convinced him that it would be impolitic to quarrel with the physician.

"They must have bribed him well!" he muttered; "I never knew the old poisoner,avaricious as he is, sell his fidelity before."

After waiting nearly an hour at the King's Arms, a carriage drove up: it contained the lawyer—he was alone.

"And Miss Ellen?" faltered Joe.

"I know that you have failed," replied Elworthy, with an air of vexation; "but I lingered to the last!"

"And have you not seen her?"

"No!"

"Nor heard?"

"Nothing!"

With an air of desperation, the poor fellow rushed from the house, despite the entreaties of Susan, and the endeavors of his companion to detain him. Elworthy closely questioned the boy, who persisted in the story he had told to Joe: that he had seen a gentleman drive up during the contest between him and Meeran, remove the still insensible Ellen, and drive off.

"Poor girl!" said the lawyer, with a sigh; "her trials are not over yet!"

CHAPTER XVII.

It is the crime, and not the scaffold,
Which makes the infamy.

With a heavy heart, Henry Ashton, at the appointed hour on the morning following the death of his friend, directed his steps towards that ponderous pile at the back of St. Peter's, which is occupied by the Holy Office—as the Inquisition is generally termed in Rome. There is nothing in the appearance of the edifice to indicate the purposes to which it is applied: it is a heavy, palatial-looking building, of mixed architecture, not without some attempt at ornament. The exterior windows are neither barred nor guarded by jalousies: visitors who have interest

enough to obtain an order to inspect the establishment, find that this simple exterior merely serves as a mask to the main building, in which the prisons, halls of audience, and the cabinets of the judges are situated.

On presenting himself at the lodge, our hero was received by the governor of the place, who at once conducted him to the cell of Martingale.

Despite his resolution, the blood rushed to his pale features as he beheld the murderer of his friend, seated at a small table in the dark, solitary cell.

"Remember," said the official who had conducted him to the place, "that no violence can be permitted."

"I understand!"

"That all here are under the protection of justice, whose shield protects the criminal from himself—her rights must not be disputed."

"Fear not," replied the visitor; "I am master of my reason; although, heaven knows," he added, with a sigh, "that I have had enough to shake it from its throne!"

The officer left the men who had so lately met as friends together. How changed were their respective positions since a few hours: one was a prisoner, in the hands of one of the most relentless tribunals in the world; the other, heart-broken, and disappointed in his dearest hopes.

For some moments they regarded each other in silence. Martingale was the first to speak.

"I sent for you, Henry Ashton," he said, "neither to ask your forgiveness nor pity: for the first, I have wronged you too deeply to expect it—there is a limit, even in your generous nature, to the virtue which religion affects, and seldom exercises; as for the latter, I despise it!"

"Take it then, unasked!" replied our hero, with an effort; "you say truly, you have deeply wronged me; for you have broken the dearest hope of my life at the moment of its fulfilment—robbed my heart of its dearest friend—broken my trust in the future—in man's truth and honor; yet I pardon you, as a Christian should do one whose hours on earth are numbered."

"Had my trust in humanity not been early broken," observed the assassin, "perhaps I had not fallen so fearfully: but enough of that; regret, in my opinion, has ever been the greatest weakness of the heart, because the most useless—with me it shall be the last. You have acted more generously by me than I expected, and you shall find that I am not ungrateful."

"Ungrateful!" iterated Henry.

"Hear me patiently: you have an enemy!"

"I know!" interrupted his visitor, "one who proceeds by the serpent's winding, slimy path—not with manly frankness—Meeran Hafaz! You need not name him to me!"

"You are right! It is to atone, as far

as is in my power, for the wrongs that you have received, that I have sent for you—to warn you against that man. Neither in intellect nor heart do I believe him human. He grasps the mind of the instrument he would employ as in a vice, analyzes its qualities, and uses them according to his purpose. He knew that I was poor, but without the moral courage to look the lean spectre in the face, discovered that I, like greater villains, had my price. He paid it without a murmur—weighed down each rising scruple with his accursed gold! You can guess the rest!"

"But why against Walter, who never wronged him?" demanded our hero.

"The blow which stretched him on a bed of sickness was not directed against him!"

"Who, then?"

"You! The dangerous position in which my intrigues at the post-office had placed me, compelled me, in a fatal moment, to attempt the concealment of one crime by the commission of another yet more fearful, and steep my hands in blood! Here," he added, "are the letters I intercepted."

He held out a packet, which he took from the lining of his coat as he spoke.

"Do not read them!" he added, as Henry Ashton was about to open the envelope, "lest the intelligence of the misery which your enemies have occasioned since your departure from England should induce you to recall your generous forgiveness, and you should curse me!"

The youth, with a violent effort, repressed his curiosity, and placed the packet within his bosom.

"Thanks! thanks! In a few days you will doubtless return to England!"

"Instantly!" replied his visitor. "That is," he added, recollecting himself, "as soon as the last rites are paid to —"

"My victim!" said Martingale, finishing the sentence for him. "'Tis just! he was a friend: not in the idle parlance of the world, but in the truest import of the word! His memory merits a no less sacrifice at your hands. The rites once past —"

"I shall return to England!" exclaimed our hero; armed with my injuries, and Walter's blood to avenge; for you are but the instrument of a yet greater villain! By heavens!" he added, "ambition does not thirst for the moment which is to crown its dream—the bridegroom for his bride's first kiss—as I do for the moment when I shall stand face to face with the destroyer."

"And when you do," added Martingale, "let the safety of the girl you love nerve your arm!"

"Farewell!" said our hero; "in this world we shall meet no more: address yourself to that Judge before whom you must appear, for pardon. If your repentance is sincere, you will not want a pleading angel at the footstool of His throne—for Walter—the noble and forgiving Walter—will be there!"

"You say truly," replied the prisoner, with a melancholy smile: "we shall not

meet again! Unless," he added, "you should be crossing the Porta del Populo at noon to-morrow!"

Henry shuddered, for he knew that this was the place of public execution in the Eternal City.

"So soon?" he said.

"Even so," replied Martingale, with a careless air; "for once the arm of Roman justice will strike speedily—and the speedier the better, for anything is better than the torture of the mind! I shall have few to mourn for me," he added, "except a foolish child, who will wonder, perchance, that his father has abandoned him to the mercies of the world!"

"A child?"

"Yes!"

"And without friends?"

"None, save its guilty parent!"

"I will be a friend to him!" said Henry Ashton, after a pause, in which the generous impulse of his nature struggled with the horror he entertained of its father's crime. "Where shall I find him?"

The unhappy man placed upon the table a paper, with the address. He did not dare to place it in the hand of the noble-minded youth, lest the contact should sully it.

"Be assured," he said, "that I will not forget him!"

"Bless you! Oh, bless you for that promise! That child is the last tie which tells my heart it still is human! For the rest, I have done with earth, and social injustice and distinctions: all that now remains, rests between its judge and me!"

Henry left the cell of the prisoner, and, after an interview with Micara, returned to his hotel.

No sooner was Martingale alone, than his manner suddenly changed. It appeared as if a heavy weight had been removed from his heart and brain.

"The scaffold!" he murmured; "they may rear the scaffold, but never shall my footsteps press the accursed planks! I have played with destiny too long, to be taken unprepared; the judgment has been given, but it shall only be executed upon my lifeless body!"

So saying, he drew from his pocket a letter-case, and, with patient labor, began to tear open the inner lining, which was firmly stitched together. At last he had made an opening sufficiently large to admit of his withdrawing a packet which he had concealed within: it contained a swift and certain poison.

Once the paper in his grasp, he felt that he was, to a certain extent, the master of his fate.

"The scaffold!" he repeated scornfully. "Oh, what a jest for those who have known and slighted me in the world; to see their predictions accomplished—that the *roué* and schemer had met with his merited reward!"

There was a coarse earthen jug, containing water, upon the table, and a glass beside it. Deliberately he filled the latter with the limpid element, and stirred the

powder with his finger till it was quite discolored.

"Now for the secret," he exclaimed, as he raised it to his lips, "the sphinx could never solve, nor Egypt's, nor all Rome's craft yet find the key to—the future!"

Scarcely had the impious words escaped him, when the glass was dashed from his hand: two of the apparitors of the Holy Office, who were appointed, from a concealed recess, to watch their prisoner day and night, had marked his every motion, and, at the very instant when he imagined himself about to escape from human justice, by anticipating death by his own hands, rushed into his cell, and disappointed him.

He was seized and bound, before he could recover from his surprise.

"Curse you!" he murmured, with a look of despair: "I would have balked the Romans of a holiday!"

"You know little of the Inquisition, then," replied one of the officers. "From the hour a prisoner enters it, till he leaves it, or is—you understand—"

"Executed!" added Martingale. Speak plainly, such ceremony is useless!"

"Till he is executed, Signor Inglesi," continued the man, "unseen eyes are ever on him—unseen hands ready to preserve him from himself."

"Half the care bestowed upon the culprit, in many instances might prevent the crime!"

"Signor, I do not understand you!"

The criminal replied only by a shrug: he did not expect to be understood. The attempt which he had made upon his life was instantly reported to the resident judge of the Holy Office; for it is one of the peculiarities of that powerful tribunal, that it is supposed to be always sitting: the consequence was, that he was instantly compelled to assume the prison dress—his hands were heavily fettered, and his cell was changed for one in which several officers of the place were to pass the night.

"The modern Romans, like the ancient ones," he muttered, "are determined not to lose a holiday!"

With this bitter thought, he threw himself upon a bench, as near as possible to the little grated window—the only source of ventilation in the place—and gazed for the last time upon the sun, whose rays faintly illuminated his cell.

"To-morrow!" he muttered, with a groan; "to-morrow!"

CHAPTER XVIII.

What though no friends in sable weeds appear;
Grieve for an hour, perchance, and mourn a year,
And bear about the mockery of woe
To midnight dances and the public show!
What though no sacred earth allow thee room,
Or hallowed dirge be muttered o'er thy tomb!
Yet shall thy grave with rising flowers be dressed,
And the green turf lie lightly o'er thy breast.

POPE.

THE first care of our hero, on reaching his hotel, was to shut himself in his cham-

ber and peruse the packet which Martingale had given him on their last interview. With an endurance which an Indian fakir might have envied, he read the long-suppressed letters, one by one ; not a groan or cry escaped him—he had wrought himself to bear that mental agony, that rending of the heart-strings, compared to which the body's sufferings are little heeded.

The unusual paleness which overspread his features, and a slight quivering of the lips, when he came to the detail of the murder of his benefactor, alone gave token of the storm of grief, indignation, and horror rising in his soul. The unnatural calmness was terrible as the pause which precedes the falling of the thunderbolt, or the explosion of the smouldering fires long pent in some volcano's breast.

"And I away!" he murmured, through his clenched teeth ; "and I away!"

To his grief for the loss of Sir William, was added the maddening thought that Ellen was left exposed to the machinations of his rival, whom his heart instinctively designated as the author of so much misery. What would have been his feelings had he known all the trials to which she had been exposed—the treachery of Colonel Mowbray, and the persecution of Meeran ! his reason must have sunk beneath the blow.

How deep and beautiful is the confidence which woman reposes in the honor of the man on whom she has bestowed her first affections! It requires years of unkindness and infidelity before her trusting nature can believe the unworthiness of the idol of her imagination. Even when conviction is forced upon her sickening heart, she hopes against hope, and trusts despite of reason ; but when once the spell is really broken, no after promise can reunite the several links.

Whilst the letters of the orphan expressed the deep anguish she endured at his silence, not one word betrayed a doubt of his faith ; illness, treachery, even death, appeared more probable to her foreboding heart, than the falsehood of the love of her choice. Ellen—sweet Ellen!" he murmured, as he pressed the signature with passionate emotion to his lips ; "I shall save thee yet from the trammels of the fiend who would destroy our happiness! The miserable, cowardly assassin!" he added ; "would that my impatient spirit could annihilate the distance which divides us! Never till now did I feel hatred towards any human being : something whispers me that, when next we meet, the contest will be mortal!"

Seldom had one so young been placed in a more embarrassing position than Henry Ashton : but a few hours since, life seemed full of promise—now all was dark and clouded. Sir William Mowbray and his son—for such he felt assured was the tie between Walter and the baronet—were dead ; each laid in an untimely grave by the hand of violence. Lady Mowbray, too, how could he break the mournful intelligence to her? How destroy her hope of

being reunited to the husband of her youth—of clasping to her maternal breast her long-lost son?

The blow was doubly severe, falling at the moment when everything seemed to promise so brilliantly for the future.

He determined to consult the Duchess of Devonshire, and be guided by her advice : her woman's heart, he rightly judged, could best decide whether to break the mournful intelligence at once to the unhappy lady, or, in pursuance of his first intention, depart with her for England.

That same evening he drove for the last time to the palace of her grace in the Corso, and related to her sympathizing ear the treachery of which he had been the victim.

"To England, instantly!" she exclaimed, speaking with that decision which takes counsel of the heart, not the brain : "lose not a moment—for that moment might place an eternal barrier between you and the object of your love! Colonel Mowbray I know to be as unscrupulous as he is cold and calculating. Still he is not so much to be feared as this Meeran Hafaz ; the headlong passion of such a man o'erleaps every barrier of manhood and of honor!"

"And Lady Mowbray?" interrupted the young man.

The duchess paused for an instant before she replied.

"I will accompany her myself," she said ; "it is not exactly the moment I should have selected to revisit my native land—but sooner or later my affairs must have taken me there."

"You think, then," inquired her visitor, "that, even under present circumstances—the death of her husband and the loss of her son, for such I am convinced Walter was to her—the voyage should be made?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Alas! what has she to hope?"

"The clearing of her fame from the calumny which has clouded it," replied the duchess ; "and perhaps the discovery of her son—for I am far from feeling the conviction which you possess, that Walter was that son, Colonel Mowbray is not the man to have shown even such poor justice to his brother's heir, as to adopt him for his own."

"Surely you do not think him capable of having murdered the infant?" exclaimed Henry, with a shudder.

"No," replied her grace, after a moment's reflection ; he is one of those who temper cruelty with prudence—who calculate the future as well as the present. The crime might not appal him, but the danger would. He may have concealed his nephew—banished him to a foreign land—caused him to be reared in ignorance and poverty ; but he has not destroyed him."

The conviction was too deeply rooted in the breast of her visitor to yield to the opinion of the speaker, unsupported as it was by evidence of any kind ; respect alone kept him from replying to her. Before taking his leave, he learned with astonishment that both her grace and Sir Thomas Lawrence had for several days possessed

proofs of his benefactor's death, but that they had determined upon withholding them from him till the result of the appeal to Pius VII., respecting Lady Mowbray, should be known.

In making his adieus to that unhappy lady, he explained to her that the death of his friend compelled his immediate return to England, where he would prepare for her reception. Poor fellow! his heart swelled with emotion as he listened to her anticipations of once more meeting the husband of her youth, without a cloud upon her fair fame. He could not undeceive her—he left that task to the sympathizing friendship of the warm-hearted Duchess of Devonshire.

It was time that he took his leave—his tears and agitation almost betrayed him. One task only remained previous to his departure from the Eternal City—it was to consign the body of Walter to its last resting-place, in the burial-ground set apart for Protestants and strangers, near the pyramid of Caius Cestus.

At an early hour the following morning, the wretched Martingale was conducted for the last time before his judges. He had been taken almost in the commission of the act for which he was about to suffer, and for once Italian justice was as rapid as it was well directed. The attempt which he had made upon his life determined the members of the Holy Office at once to proceed to execution, every moment of his life was numbered.

The hall, as usual on such occasions, was hung with black, relieved only by the large ivory crucifix suspended over the chair of the inflexible Micara, who presided. Groups of apparitors and officials were standing at the lower end of the apartment, the doors of which were guarded by a party of carbineers, under the command of the lieutenant of the Governor of Rome.

It was his duty to receive the prisoner from the hands of the members of the tribunal—who, being priests, could not pronounce a sentence involving the shedding of blood, it being against the canons of the Catholic Church.

On an arm-chair at the foot of the dais, the Governor of Rome himself was seated. It was his province to act as doomsday—or, in other words, to pronounce the judgment of the Holy Office.

The criminal bowed with his usual grace when led into the hall. He knew very well the purpose for which he was brought there, but not even the approach of death could disturb the serenity of his manner. Had it been possible, he would have abridged, brief as they were, the intervening hours.

The secretary of the Holy Office read the decree by which the judges, finding the prisoner, Robert Martingale, guilty of the crime of blood, consigned him to the secular arm to deal with him. He concluded by adding the usual recommendation to mercy.

The governor rose, and asked the prison-

er if he had anything to urge why sentence of death should not be pronounced against him.

"Nothing!" replied Martingale, with a bitter smile; "for it would avail me little here, or I might ask your right to punish one murder by another—for the taking of human life is murder, no matter what mockeries and superstitious forms accompany the act; but I do not wish to prate," he added; "give Rome its holiday!"

"Say, rather," interrupted the Governor, to whom the prisoner's observations were anything but pleasing, "justice its due. I am not here to defend the law, but to pronounce its judgment: which is, that at the hour of noon you be led into the Piazza del Populo, and there beheaded on the public scaffold; your body to be interred in the common moat, without the city walls!"

"It will rest as well there," said the condemned man, coolly, "as under the dome of St. Peter's. I have been too difficult in the choice of my habitation while living, to care much about my resting-place when dead!"

The condemned man was instantly removed from the prison of the Holy Office to that of the city, where the Governor informed him that, if he wished it, a priest of his own faith might be permitted privately to visit him. The offer was politely but firmly declined.

No sooner was it known in Rome that the execution of an Englishman was about to take place, than the city poured forth its motley population of artists, travellers, monks, artisans, and tradesmen; spectators of a higher rank were not wanting. Strange that such a magnetic power should exist in the horror excited by the fearful spectacle of a public death: its influence is frequently felt by the strongest mind, and even those whose humanity or sensibility shrinks from the sight of human suffering, feel a strange fascination in listening to the tale.

To the honour of the Italian women, there were but few of the gentler sex gathered in the magnificent square: the desire of marking the last struggles of the victim to outraged justice, of counting its agonies and tears, is not one of the morbid tastes which can be laid to their charge, whatever other faults truth must assign them.

At a short distance from the scaffold were a party of Englishmen, many of whom had been acquainted with the condemned both at home and in Italy. The crime for which he was about to suffer had destroyed all sympathy for his fate: they attended, as they might at any other spectacle, merely to see him die. Several began to look impatiently at their watches; as the hour drew near, the excitement increased.

"This will be strange news at Newmarket!" observed a sporting baronet, who had taken the odds that Martingale would die game.

"I can't understand the affair," added the gentleman with whom the first speaker had betted; "always thought him a shrewd

fellow—never knew him make his book so blunderingly before!"

"The usual case, I suppose," said a retired dandy; "a woman!"

"The beautiful Therese Colonna!" exclaimed one.

"No; the divine Pauline! Mowbray was eternally at the Villa Borghese," pronounced a second.

"Not more than his friend Ashton?" added another.

The speculations and surmises of the speakers were suddenly hushed—the measured tramp of approaching cavalry was heard advancing along the Corso: in a few minutes, the escort which surrounded the vehicle containing the prisoner and the officers of police who guarded him, entered the piazza at a sharp trot.

The Romans—who were accustomed to see not only the brothers of the Order of Mercy, but troops of Franciscans and other friars, accompany the condemned wretch to the place of execution, filling his ears with exhortations, and the air with psalms and prayers—were inexpressibly shocked at the absence of the holy fathers on the present occasion.

"Cossetto!" muttered one of the porters of the Ripetta, "I have often heard that the English die like dogs, but never believed it till now!"

One of his neighbors observed that the criminal was a heretic; but even this reason, generally so unanswerable to an Italian, failed to convince the *faquino*, whose sympathy was sharpened by the recollection of the many scudi he had received from the countrymen of the assassin.

"Heretic or not," he replied, "their prayers could have done him no harm, and would have been but a mark of politeness to the Inglesi, who spend so much money in Rome!"

The instant the carriage reached the foot of the scaffold, Martingale descended, and, after a few brief words to the greffier, who demanded if he had any declaration to make, ascended the fatal planks. The instrument by which he was to suffer was the guillotine—first introduced at Rome by the French in the time of Napoleon, and almost the only improvement of his administration which has been retained; but its superiority over the brutal and clumsy apparatus previously in use, was too apparent even for a government of priests to avoid acknowledging it.

Before being strapped to the fatal plank, which turns upon a pivot, and then slides in a groove, till the head of the victim is brought under the fatal knife, Martingale looked slowly round upon the vast multitude assembled to witness his death. A very slight flush suffused his cheek as he recognized several of his former fashionable friends in the group of his fellow-countrymen, which the officers had permitted to stand within the line of soldiers formed around the scaffold. It was a delicate attention paid to their nationality. Englishmen have the reputation on the continent

of seeking sensations in the terrible, rather than the intellectual and beautiful—hunting after morbid excitement, instead of healthful pleasure; of course we mean morally and physically.

The murderer waved his hand to his quondam associates with the same careless grace that he would have done in the park or mall; and then, turning to the group around him, demanded which was the executioner:

A little withered old man, dressed in a rusty suit of black, stepped forward.

"I am," he said, "at the service of your excellency."

Martingale smiled bitterly: a being whose strength, compared to his own, was as that of an infant—a thing he could have crushed and trampled on—armed with the fearful authority of the law, stood ready to consign him to the grave. Tossing his purse to him, he said, in a firm tone,

"What you have to do, do quickly."

"Si, signor!" exclaimed the fellow, clutching the gold; "you shall not wait an instant."

At a sign from their chief, his assistants led the wretched victim of pride and ambition to the plank; he was strapped to it in an instant, and pushed into the groove. The instant his head was inclosed in a circle made to receive it, the last minister of justice pulled a small cord, the knife descended with a sharp, hissing sound, and the head of the murderer fell in the basket, filled with sawdust, which stood ready to receive it.

"You have lost!" said the baronet, coolly addressing the gentleman who had given him long odds; "Martingale died game."

This was the fitting epitaph of a man whose talents and energies, had they been applied to an honorable career, might have achieved distinction and fortune. Misdirected, they led him, step by step, down the abyss of crime, till outraged society avenged itself in his death and degradation.

At the hour of sunset, that same evening, two funerals took place in the environs of Rome. One was attended only by a few officials, who consigned, without prayer or ceremony, the corse of the murderer to a deep pit, dug in the remains of a moat which formerly surrounded the city walls. The unhallowed resting-place was hastily filled with the earth and stones which had been cast from it, and those who had been present retired from the spot as men retire from the fulfilment of an unpleasant duty. Not a benison was uttered over it, or a single tear shed to consecrate the grave.

The simple but sublime prayers of the English church had been pronounced over the final resting-place of the noble-hearted Walter Mowbray, whose remains were deposited in a simple grave at the foot of the pyramid of Caius Cestus. The clergyman and mourners had all withdrawn, save Henry Ashton, who lingered in the burial-ground, unwilling that any human eyes should witness the weakness of his sorrows.

—the tears sacred to friendship and to virtue.

There was a stillness in the air, a solitude in the scene, which affected the imagination far more powerfully than the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault of the most magnificent temple—a silence and a solitude which is only felt when the spirit is suffering and lonely.

"But for one tie—only one," he murmured, "how gladly would I have done with life, and rest beside thee! The world may give me other friends, but not a friend like thee! Thy memory shall rest enshrined in my heart, dear Walter, and the recollections of thy virtues shall embalm it!"

"There is another tie," he added, after a pause, which binds me still to earth—revenge. My benefactor and my friend—father and son—from their untimely graves call on me to pursue it. Here, by this hallowed dust—by Him, whose name yon stars pronounce, whose might the roaring sea or tempest's breath alike make manifest—I do devote my soul to its fulfilment! Tears shall be henceforth weakness: when I have avenged their murder, there will be time to mourn them!"

Our hero knelt, and, in the excitement of the moment, pressed his lips to the fresh-turned earth upon the grave of Walter; then, as if fearing to trust his firmness by further delay, he slowly left the burial-ground.

There was something terrible in the air of confidence and calm resolution which marked his manner—every energy of his young heart seemed concentrated in one powerful passion—hatred. Could the author of so much misery have heard the vow, and witnessed the look which accompanied it, even he might have trembled.

By daybreak the following morning, Henry Ashton left the Eternal City, on his way to England, as fast as four fleet horses could bear him along the Appian Way. He determined to travel day and night—to deny himself even a moment's rest till he once more stood upon his native strand: once there, he felt the rest was easy.

CHAPTER XIX.

The toils are loosened, but not broken;
They may knit again, closing the victim
In their meshes. OLD PLAY.

WHEN Ellen recovered from the swoon into which the terror and excitement of the scene she had encountered had thrown her, she found herself reposing on a bed, in a plain, but comfortably furnished chamber, attended by an aged female, whose respectable air and matron-like appearance were in themselves sufficient to inspire confidence.

"Where am I?" she demanded, casting a look of terror round the apartment, as if she dreaded to encounter the glance of her relentless persecutor.

"Where you are safe, my dear young la-

dy—quite safe," replied the female; "under the protection of my master!"

At the word master, the orphan shuddered—for her fears reverted to Meeran Hafaz or the colonel.

"His name?"

"I do not know it," answered the woman; "but do not let that alarm you! I know that he is good, although his conduct may appear strange; he has been most anxious on your account!"

"I must see him!" exclaimed the agitated girl; "hear from his own lips all I have either to hope or fear! Suspense," she added, with an hysterical burst of grief, "destroys me!"

Before the party to whom she had addressed herself could answer, there was a gentle tap at the door of the room.

"It is my master," said the attendant; "fear nothing—you will find in him a father!"

Without waiting for the assent of her charge, she disappeared in the passage, and, after a few hastily whispered words, returned, followed by a tall man, of middle age, and severe, but benevolent cast of countenance. Despite her alarm, Ellen could not avoid being struck by the dignity of his appearance: a beard, which time had already partially silvered, descended to his breast.

After the description we have given, we need scarcely inform our readers that her preserver was the Khan. He, too, like Elworthy, had been upon the watch, and fortunately arrived in time to save her.

"Whom have I to bless or fear?" demanded the orphan, fixing her eyes with an imploring expression upon him.

"A friend," answered the renegade, mildly; who has indeed proved himself one, by breaking the long familiar ties of human love which bound him to your persecutor! Fear not," he added, taking her gently by the hand, and speaking in a soothing tone; "you are safe! I would not abandon to its enemies the meanest of God's creatures that had sought the shelter of my roof, far less one whom heaven must love, and manhood is bound to guard!"

"You are the friend, then—the generous unknown being—who the physician named to me?"

The renegade replied to her only by a smile.

"Bless you!" she continued; "heaven bless you for your kindness to one whom all seem to have forgotten? Tears must be my thanks—I cannot speak as I ought; but He who has promised to be a father to the fatherless, will recompense you for your generous protection!"

"May He accept it," said the Khan, who felt pained at listening to his own praise, as an atonement for my cruel wrongs towards one who would have watched over your safety as the guardian angel watches the soul committed to his charge!"

These words, perhaps inadvertently uttered, plunged the still excited Ellen in a train of thought which nearly shook her

reason. Was it possible, she asked herself, that he alluded to her dead uncle? and if so, what was the nature of the wrongs he named—could it be murder?

"You mean Sir William Mowbray?" she almost shrieked. "You are—"

"Sir William Mowbray?" hastily interrupted the Khan, at once perceiving her suspicion. "No, young lady—no! I would have defended him with my life! The child he loved is not more innocent of his blood than I am. More than twenty years have elapsed," he added, with a sigh, "since I beheld him."

The tone in which these words were uttered carried conviction with them; the eye of the speaker was untroubled, and his voice firm and clear, as that which an approving conscience gives.

"Thank heaven!" sobbed Ellen, relieved from a fearful terror. "Forgive me that I wronged you!"

Her next inquiries were for her friends, the faithful Susan and her lover, who had risked so much to save her. Her mysterious protector answered by the assurance of his belief that they were safe. The honest rustic, he observed, was not one to be easily taken; and, as for Susan—with all his vices and storms of passion, Meean Hafaz was incapable of injuring a woman. The heart of the young Indian, he felt assured, was not yet corrupt enough for that.

He next persuaded his guest to take a draught which he had prepared, promising her that the female, whose presence seemed to Ellen a protection, should not quit her side. The orphan received it with grateful confidence from his hand: so much kindness and sympathy, she felt assured, could not be the mask to deceit or cruelty.

"In the morning," he said, "I will seek your friends; by that time they will have returned to London. I shall doubtless hear of them at Lawyer Elworthy's."

The name of the man whom Sir William Mowbray had trusted, appeared to Ellen as an additional proof of his sincerity; and she felt, as he left the chamber, as if she had parted from a friend.

"I have heard his voice before!" she thought; "it returns like the memory of my childhood's dream, or some long-forgotten strain. Where could it have been? In India? Yes—yes! it must have been in India!"

Vainly she endeavoured to render her recollections more distinct: her overwrought brain gradually yielded to the narcotic which the renegade had prepared, and she sank into the arms of Nature's nurse—a sweet, refreshing sleep.

Hail, blessed sleep! thine is the gifted spell
To wake in shadows scenes remembered well;
To set the chained imagination free,
And paint, in rainbow hues, whate'er might be.
Visions of bliss with thoughts of earth combine,
And form a whole half human, half divine.

In her dreams the sufferer was happy: the scenes of her youth appeared again. She saw the eyes of affection beaming upon hers; kind, familiar faces smiled upon her;

Henry and Sir William too, were there; and she felt happy—oh, how happy! her heart appeared to have recovered all it had ever loved or mourned. No hideous image marred the pleasing picture.

Such dreams are like the reflection of a pure and virtuous mind, seen in a mirror, ere passion's breath has sullied it—they are given to the innocent alone.

The Khan had rightly judged, when he supposed that the lawyer and his friends, once assured of the failure of their scheme would not remain an hour longer than was necessary in the neighbourhood of Cromwell House, to brave the wrath of Meean. Before, however, they quitted Mortlake, Joe Beans arranged with Ralph to watch the proceedings of its inmates. The lad promised to bring him daily intelligence to the office of Mr. Elworthy. He ran little risk in doing so; for, to use his own words, it was no easy thing to bar him from the old, crumbling mansion. He knew each turn and hiding-place it contained much better than his prayers.

At daybreak, the disappointed friends of the orphan returned to London, which they reached at an early hour. Susan was heart-broken at the failure of their scheme, which had promised so fairly; and poor, faithful Joe was little less dispirited than herself.

"I promised Master Harry," he said, "that I would watch over her and protect her—and I have broken my word. If any misfortune happens—I shall never be able to look him in the face again. He would have died rather than have deceived me!"

"It is indeed most unfortunate!" exclaimed the lawyer, who had been perusing the letters which had arrived during his absence. "Dr. Orme, on whose promise I relied to second my application to the Chancellor, has left England."

"Left England!" repeated the rustic friend of our hero, with an air of astonishment. "Parson gone to *furrin parts!*"

"To Italy," added Mr. Elworthy, with an air of vexation; "at such a moment, too! Little does he dream of the mischief his presence will occasion!"

"He be in the right!" exclaimed Joe, with a cry of joy. "Parson be always right; He will bring Master Harry back; and then I should loike to see who will keep Miss Ellen from him!"

The man of law shook his head despondingly: he had not the same confidence in the presence of our hero as the speaker.

"I thought," he said, addressing his senior clerk, who entered the private office where they were seated, without being summoned, "that I gave orders not to be disturbed?"

"So I told the gentleman, sir," replied the man, submissively; "but he would not take a refusal!"

"What gentleman?" hastily demanded his employer.

"A strange one," continued the scribe; "for he looks more like a heathen, with his long beard, than a Christian! And

yet," he added, "he must be a gentleman—he speaks with as much authority as a peer. Tell your master," he said, "that I bring him intelligence that he will be glad to hear, touching the circumstance which at the present moment most occupies his mind?"

"See him?" whispered Joe, struck by the speaker's description of the visitor; "it must be the Khan!"

"And who is the Khan?" inquired the lawyer.

This was more than our honest friend could inform him; all he knew was, that he had, on more than one occasion, shown himself friendly to Henry Ashton, and that, in his judgment, was a guarantee for every other virtue.

"Admit him," said the man of law; "it is a faint hope, but in our present position we must not cast the least chance aside."

The renegade entered the office with his usual calm, deliberate step. Mr. Elworthy felt that he was about to hold communication with no common person.

"Your business, sir?" he inquired, after having pointed to a chair.

Before making a reply, his singular visitor scanned the countenances of all present. Turning towards the clerk, whom curiosity kept lingering in the room, he silently pointed to the door.

"Go!" said his employer; "I will ring, should I require your services."

As soon as the fellow had withdrawn, the old man took the proffered seat.

"You were at Mortlake," he began, "last night?"

"Before I answer that question," replied the cautious man of law, "I must first learn your motive."

"I came," continued the Khan, "to discuss facts, not motives. I need not observe to one of your experience, that the latter are too often confounded with pretenses."

"I was at Mortlake," said Mr. Elworthy, more and more puzzled by the manner of his visitor.

"And these persons with you?"

"Yes."

"He knows all about it!" exclaimed Joe, with a faint smile; for he began to entertain a vague hope from the visit of the stranger. "Best tell him all, Master Lawyer!"

"Where you attempted," resumed the renegade, "to carry off Miss De Vere from the guardianship of her uncle, her only legal protector: are you aware of the consequences of such a step?"

"He has abused his rights shamefully—infamously abused them!" exclaimed the legislist; and my conscience acquits me."

"I thought, sir," once more interrupted his visitor, "I told you that I came to discuss facts, not motives. That yours are known to me, my presence here is sufficient proof; and if I alluded to the risk you have run in acting as you have, it was to justify my own caution—perhaps to test yours. I am aware of the sufferings Miss De Vere

has endured, and the dangers she has escaped!"

"Escaped!" shouted the attached friend of our hero, starting from his seat, and clasping the speaker by the hand; "did 'ee say escaped? Say it again, and I'll kneel and worship 'ee!"

"Escaped!" repeated the Khan.

Joe's joy became so wild and boisterous, that it was some moments before the conversation could be renewed. In his transports he embraced Susan, kissed away her tears, asked what she was crying for, and declared "that he could meet Master Harry now without shame." In the exuberance of happiness, he could even have embraced the lawyer and the messenger of so much joy.

"This is indeed a happy event!" exclaimed the former of the last-named personages; "for never, in the course of my professional career, have my feelings been more deeply interested. May I ask where the niece of my late client is concealed?"

"To be sure thee may!" hastily interrupted Joe. "He be too good to keep her from her friends; I *knowed* thee hadst a loinking towards Master Harry! From the night of Sir William's burial, I have not forgotten what thee saidst, when ——"

This was addressed to the Khan, who, whatever confidence had passed between himself and the speaker, did not wish it to be repeated in the hearing of Mr. Elworthy. Perhaps he feared that the astute mind of the lawyer might draw inferences, and put questions which neither his former regard nor oath to Meeran Hafaz permitted him to answer.

"It was for that purpose," he said, interrupting him, "that I came to seek you; the health of the young lady is already severely shaken—the presence of her friends will prove more beneficial than even the skill of the physicians."

The thoughts of seeing the object of Henry Ashton's affection—the being he had promised his absent friend to guard and watch over—so completely diverted the current of the thoughts of the honest rustic, that he quite forgot the allusion he was about to make. Not so the man of law; he had noted his words, and treasured them for a future occasion.

It was finally arranged that the party should leave the chambers in the temple directly, and proceed by water to London Bridge, by which means they trusted to avoid the danger of being followed. From thence they could take a coach to the retreat of the renegade.

When, at a late hour, Ellen awoke from the refreshing slumber which had lasted so many hours, the first person she saw at the side of her couch was Susan, smiling through her tears. At first the orphan imagined herself to be still dreaming, but the warm drops which fell upon her hand, as the faithful girl covered it with kisses, assured her happiness was real.

"Saved, saved!" she murmured, in mental thanksgiving; "but where is your lover

—Henry's true and only friend? Is he, too, safe?"

Susan assured her that he was, and poor Joe—who had been listening at the door to assure himself by hearing her voice, that the object of his solicitude was really there—hastily retreated.

"She called me his friend!" he said, as he dashed aside the tears, which he fancied disgraced his manhood: "if the Colonel or the Indian Meean attempt to harm her again, or separate her from Harry, I'll shoot 'em as I would a couple of wild cats, though I hang for it the next minute!"

So saying, he descended to the lower apartment, where the Khan and Lawyer Elworthy were deeply engaged in conversation.

CHAPTER XX.

How weak an arm can strike a giant's blow,
When Providence directs it—childhood prove
The avenger, when accredited by heaven!

DRAMATIC SKETCHES.

ALTHOUGH Amble, the schoolmaster of Mortlake, had pronounced that Nature had denied to Red Ralph the faculty of imagination, to make amends, she had amply endowed him with the quality of cunning. The boy wisely suffered two or three days to elapse, before he ventured to approach the scene of his late exploits. He was fearful of being recognized, for he was quite shrewd enough to know that the transactions he had witnessed were of no ordinary character; and he felt an instinctive presentiment of danger, should he fall into the hands of those whose schemes he had attempted to baffle.

He first ventured cautiously to approach the offices, which he entered by one of those unsuspected ways known only to himself: there, safely ensconced in the loft over the apartment of the groom, he took a survey of the mansion, and noticed with pleasure that, of the innumerable chimneys, one only gave token of being used.

"Gentlefolks be gone!" he muttered, with a grin of satisfaction; "there be only some one left to take care of place."

Emboldened by this discovery, he next crept to the house, which, according to his usual practice, he entered from one of the skylights in the roof, immediately over the chambers lately occupied by the domestics of Meean Hafaz and the colonel. Everything was in that state of confusion which denotes a hasty departure; the furniture out of place, and in most admired disorder.

From the servants' rooms he descended to the principal apartment—the fires were all extinguished. In the saloon he saw several letters scattered carelessly upon the table: these he eagerly seized, and stuffed into his pocket.

"All gone!" he kept repeating to himself—"all gone! The old house and I may keep company together!"

So convinced was he that the place was no longer tenanted, that he made his way boldly, by the great staircase, to the

ground floor. He had forgotten the solitary stream of smoke which he had seen issuing from the chimney of the kitchen—he even began to whistle. The imprudence nearly cost him his life, for it attracted the attention of Will Sideler, who had been left to take charge of the place.

No sooner did the ruffian catch the sound, than arming himself with a large knife, he rose from his seat in the kitchen, and crept cautiously along the passages till he reached the great hall, into which the dining-room opened. This was the work of some little time, from his lameness—for he had only partially recovered from the effects of the severe chastisement he had received at the hands of Meean Hafaz. A grin of savage pleasure divided his thin lips, as he peered into the room, and discovered the boy seated at the table, devouring the remains of his own breakfast.

Determined this time not to be disappointed of his prey, he slipped off his shoes, that his footfall might not startle the lad, whose back was turned towards him.

Fortunately for poor Ralph, he was seated directly opposite a large mirror, which reflected not only his own delicate person, but the entrance to the dining-room, and a portion of the passage beyond. He was in the act of raising the bone of a fowl to his capacious mouth, when his arm became momentarily arrested by terror: he distinctly saw in the glass the warrener with the knife in his hand, stealing on tip-toe behind him.

At that moment the instinct of self-preservation served him better than imagination. He rapidly glided from his seat, and disappeared under the long table, which, when he rose again, was placed, by this manoeuvre, between him and his enemy.

Sideler, with equal tact, concealed the weapon he carried in his sleeve.

No sooner did the lad find a barrier between himself and the warrener, than he recovered his former courage; for he felt assured that in a contest of agility, the old man would be but a poor match for him; the great danger was the possibility of his once placing his iron grasp upon him.

"What does 'ee want wi' I?" he demanded.

"What are you doing here?" replied the ruffian, endeavoring at the same time not to look too ferociously, for he perceived his disadvantage. "If I were not one of the best-natured fellows in the world, I should send you to prison for breaking into the house."

"Thee dare not!" exclaimed Ralph, with a saucy look.

"Dare not?"

"Noa, dare not!"

"And why so?" demanded the old man, eager to learn how much, or how little, the chink knew or suspected of the late transactions at the Cromwell House.

"Cos I'd tell Squire Justice of the pretty lady that wor prisoner here; and how thee tried to serve out the maid, and all about the black woman that frightened I so!"

"Indeed?"

"Ees, indeed!—thee beast nation 'cute—but I," added Ralph, "am 'cuter! I heard old lawyer say he should live to see thee hanged!"

The brow of Will Sideler grew dark, as he listened to the taunting words of the lad: his rage was not unmixed with alarm, for he rightly judged that the lawyer could have been no other than Mr. Elworthy, who had so nearly been his victim.

"Hanged!" he repeated with a laugh; "a likely story, indeed! What should I be hanged for?"

"I don't know," answered Ralph; "murder, most likely!"

"Murder?"

"Ees—thee has committed more nor one, I reckon; does 'ee think I didn't see the knife in thee hand as thee crept like a thief, or summut worse, behind me?"

Finding that his purpose was discovered, the ruffian made a sudden spring at the speaker—but Ralph was too nimble for him; he dived rapidly under his arm, sprang over the table, and rushed through the door, into the hall; unfortunately the French windows which opened upon the lawn were closed: with great presence of mind, the boy next tried the folding-doors which communicated with the staircase he had so lately descended: to his confusion, he found that the warrener, in his way from the kitchen, had taken the precaution to lock them.

"You can't escape!" exclaimed the ruffian, who had followed closely upon his steps; "I have trapped too many such vermin in my time, to be baffled by such as you! You may as well give in—I won't hurt you!"

Ralph, however, was of a different opinion; perhaps the last assurance did not appear sufficiently satisfactory. The poor fellow knew that his only chance of escape was by the kitchen—if that was secured, all would be over with him. Fortunately, he remembered the trap in the floor of the passage which conducted to it—it was his only chance of safety.

"I bean't caught yet!" he doggedly answered; "there be many who go out shearing, as old master used to say, and return shorn!"

Darting down the corridor, he had time to raise the trap before Will Sideler reached the entrance: it was so obscure, from the closing of the shutters and doors of the hall, that the ruffian did not perceive the abyss at his feet, but pursued his way, uttering curses and fearful menaces. It would have fared ill at that moment with poor Ralph, if the ruffian had succeeded in laying his powerful grasp upon him; for, when excited by resistance, like all cowardly natures, he became cruel and ferocious.

"It be all useless!" he shouted to the flying boy; the doors are securely locked, and the keys——"

There was a break in the voice, and the noise of a heavy body falling from a dis-

tance—then a groan or two, and all was still.

Ralph instantly paused, and began to dance and grin with delight. It would have been difficult to tell whether he felt more pleasure in having outwitted his pursuer, or escaping from his clutches.

"Trapped!" he exclaimed; "I ha' trapped un at last!"

He returned towards the corridor, and, carefully feeling his way to the edge of the trap, peered down the abyss—it was too dark for him to distinguish any object.

"Holloa!" he shouted; "what does 'ee think now?"

A groan was the only reply.

"Beest 'ee hurt?"

Still no answer.

"Well," said Ralph, "I'll seek out lawyer gentleman and his friend—they'll fin' a way to make 'ee speak, I warrant me!"

As he was about to turn back the trap-door, the voice of the warrener restrained him.

"I have broken my leg!" he said.

"Won't do!" replied the boy; "I have jumped down dozens o' times, and never hurted myself; it won't do!"

He forgot the difference between a man of Will Sideler's weight, unexpectedly falling from a height of twelve feet and the act of leaping down, by a slight youth like himself.

"I tell you," repeated the ruffian, with a bitter curse; "that my leg is broken!"

"Pity it wasn't the neck!" answered the lad, who did not believe him; "but it will come to that at last!"

"Send for help!"

"For the justice, thee mean'st! that be the only help thee will get from me!" So saying, the speaker let fall the door, and the ruffian was left to his agony, darkness, and his own reflections.

Ralph's joy was something like that of the man who had caged a tiger, and, when he had caught him, did not know what to do with him. In this dilemma, he decided on making the best of his way to London; find out Joe Beans, who had given him the address of Lawyer Elworthy; and confide the affair, which now began to assume a serious aspect, to him.

"If I have broke his leg," he thought, "it would serve un right: he would have done worse to me! They can't hang I for it, do what they will!"

Shortly after, he left the house, and started for London. He did not find his way to the Temple, where the chambers of the worthy lawyer were situated, till after office hours: consequently he could not obtain an interview with Joe that night.

"No matter!" thought Ralph; "I ha' brass—and gowd, too, for the matter o' that—in my pocket; and I can as well stay here!"

So saying, he made the best of his way to a public house, in the neighborhood of Covent Garden, which he had frequently visited with the market gardeners from Mort-

lake, and where he knew he could procure a bed for the night.

"I wonder," he thought, with a grin of satisfaction, as he devoured a plate of beef and potatoes, "how old man likes his quarters—he mun be tarnation hungry!"

Several times the question returned to him, and he began to think that, after all, he might get into difficulties through his meddling with the warrener.

At a very early hour the following morning, Ralph presented himself at the office in the Temple. Mr. Elworthy, in anticipation of his visits, had given strict orders to the clerks that the lad should be at once admitted to his presence, or, in the event of his absence, detained till his return. Fortunately, however, the lawyer was already there when his visitor arrived.

"Well, my lad!" he said, pointing to him to take a seat; "you bring me some intelligence from Mortlake?"

"Noa, sir!" replied the lad; "I ha' brought nothing!"

"I mean," said the gentleman, with a smile, "that you have something to tell me?"

"Ees, I have; but where be Mr. Beans?"

"Absent, at the house of a friend."

"Oh, then he don't live here?" observed Ralph, with a sigh.

"No; why do you inquire?"

"Nothing, sir!" hastily answered the boy, who had a secret terror of lawyers, and trembled at the idea of being questioned; "still, I should loike to see him!"

Struck by his importunity, and partly guessing the cause of his reserve, Elworthy rang the bell, and directed the clerk who answered it to take a note to an address which he gave him, and accompany the person whom he should find there back to the office.

"Mr. Beans will soon be here," he said, as soon as the man had left the room.

This piece of intelligence seemed wonderfully to relieve the mind of his visitor, who gradually became more communicative. He even went so far as to mention his visit to Cromwell House, his encounter with the warrener, his escape—but not a word of the trap or its consequences.

"The family, then," observed Mr. Elworthy, "have left?"

"Ees, sir."

"Are you quite certain?"

"They be all gone but the old man," replied the boy.

"And perhaps by this time," said the gentleman, pettishly, "he has left, too!"

Ralph began to grin. He knew that he had him safe enough.

"I trust it is not the case," continued the speaker; "I would give something rather than lose such a chance of laying hold of him."

"Would 'ee, though?" demanded the boy.

"I would."

"How much would 'ee give?"

"Fifty pounds, at least—my ring!"

"Fifty pounds!" repeated Ralph.—"What, fifty gowden suverins?"

"Even so."

"Give them to me, then," continued his visitor. "Egad, my fortin is made! for I ha' got un—I ha' got un!"

To the great astonishment of the lawyer, his visitor threw his cap into the air, and began to dance, like a newly liberated bear, round the apartment.

"Got who?" impatiently demanded Mr. Elworthy.

"The old man—the chap you and Mr. Beans call the warrener. He be safe enough!"

"But he may escape!"

"Not out of my trap!" exclaimed the lad, with a grin; "not out of my trap!"

CHAPTER XXI.

Hope springs eternal in the human breast.
Man never is, but always to be blest.
The soul uneasy and confined at home,
Rests and expatiates in a life to come.

POPE'S ESSAY ON MAN.

It was astonishing the change which a few days of quietude and repose produced in the health and appearance of Ellen. Her cheek gradually lost that pale, sickly hue which generally follows the attack of fever; and although the traces of severe suffering were undoubtedly visible, they had not that character of indelibility which the future cannot efface.

Being no longer subjected to the power of her enemies, both her heart and mind were comparatively at peace.

Her great anxiety—and we doubt not but our female readers will think it a very natural one—was for the return of her lover, of whose fidelity a suspicion had never entered her imagination. She trusted to him with all the confidence of woman's nature, ere bitter experience has broken the promise of her dreams, and taught her that the words which fall like a spell upon the ear, when uttered by the lips we love, can be breathed only to deceive.

She attributed his silence to illness, or to the probability that Meeran Hafaz and her unprincipled uncle had intercepted her correspondence; but to change or indifference, never! The testimony of an angel to such a tale would scarcely have been credited by the confiding girl.

The knowledge that the warm-hearted Dr. Orme had set out for Italy, in order to discover his young favourite, was an additional consolation: she prayed daily for his success and speedy return.

The return! There is both music and poetry in the word. Like dew to the faded flower, it brings strength to the pining heart—it implies the re-knitting of affections which absence too long has tried—it speaks of home, of the fulfilment of hopes and dreams, of the smiles and tears which welcome the wanderer back. How often do the lips of woman, in solitude and suffering, breathe the prayer, whose burthen is comprised in that one word—*return!*

Ellen loved to dwell upon the word, and the bright, sunny picture of the future to

which it was the key. She would sit for hours in her chamber, absorbed in dreamy thoughts, which did more to recall the rose of health to her cheek, than all which medicine could achieve.

At such times, her faithful attendant, Susan, seeing that she desired to be alone, would leave her, to assist in the household duties of the place, which were considerably augmented by the presence of her young mistress and herself in the solitary residence of the renegade.

The Widow Barnes, the only domestic of the Khan, was a simple, faithful creature, whose fidelity no bribe could corrupt ; but, unfortunately, like most ignorant persons, she was both credulous and superstitious.

The retired life which her master had hitherto led, joined to the circumstance of her being excluded from the largest room in the house—the door of which was kept carefully locked, and the shutters closed—disposed her to listen to the idle gossip of the neighborhood. Some said that her employer was a coiner ; others hinted that his pursuits were of a still darker nature. The old woman inclined to the latter opinion herself, for she had frequently been startled from her sleep by strange noises, resembling—as she expressed it to Susan, whom she admitted to her confidence—the roaring of a lion, more than anything else ; and all from the mysterious chamber where the Khan passed the greater portion of his time. Never having seen the cheetah, or hunting leopard, no wonder she was at a loss to account for them.

"I don't believe a word of it," replied the village girl—whose countenance, however, belied her assertion, for it was deeply impressed with awe and terror. "Your master is too good to have anything to do with the powers of darkness."

"He is good," said the old woman, forgetting for a moment her superstitious fears, and listening only to the promptings of her gratitude ; "he has been kind to me and mine."

"And yet you accuse him of ——"

"I don't accuse him of anything," interrupted the Widow Barnes ; "I only repeat what all the neighbors say of him. He speaks with no one."

"Perhaps he is not fond of conversation," observed Susan.

"He does not look like a Christian."

"I have yet to learn that a man's Christianity depends upon his looks!" added the girl. "I see how it is" she said ; "you have listened to the tales of a set of idle gossips, who would rather speak ill of their fellow-creatures, than admit they know nothing about them."

"That won't account for the noises I have heard," answered the widow—who, although a very worthy person, began to feel piqued that her judgment should be doubted.

"But the wind might!" was the reply.

"Or the voices which I heard myself?"

"Voices!" repeated Susan, with a look of incredulity.

Drawing her chair closer towards the one on which the speaker was seated—the usual prelude to confidence or scandal—Mrs. Barnes informed her new friend how, being startled from her sleep by the fearful cries which she heard in the room below, she had descended the stairs, and listened at the door of the forbidden chamber, where she distinctly heard the Khan threatening some one that some person, or thing, should tear him in pieces, if he resisted ; that the menace was followed by a deep growl, and then a supplication for mercy.

It is scarcely necessary to inform our readers that this occurred on the night of Dr. Guyot's visit to the renegade, when he so incautiously placed himself within the spring of the cheetah.

"And what followed?" demanded Susan, pale with terror ; "do speak!" she added, as her companion shook her head mysteriously ; "you almost frighten me!"

"I returned to my bed more dead than alive," said the widow.

"And this stranger—perhaps some visitor?"

"Till you came, my master never had any visitors ; at least, I never let any in ; and I am still more certain that he did not let any out—for I laid awake all night, and must have heard him."

Susan did not know what to think—the tale of the old woman was so circumstantial : she resolved at all events to consult her sweetheart, Joe Beans, upon the subject, upon his return : she had more faith in his judgment than her own. Unfortunately, he had that very morning accompanied Red Ralph to Mortlake, in order to liberate the warrener, as narrated in the preceding chapter. The Khan, too, was absent, and, except her young mistress, they were left in the house by themselves : a fact which did not tend to increase her courage, after the severe trials to which it had so lately been exposed.

Not willing to let the old woman perceive the effect which her tale had produced upon her, she turned it off by observing that she must have been dreaming.

At that moment, a cry so loud and unearthly, that there was no possibility of mistaking it for human, came from the mysterious chamber, adjoining the room in which they were sitting—it lasted for more than half a minute. At first it consisted of one prolonged note—then broke into a howl like that of rage ; after which it sank into a whine, and then died away.

Had either Susan or Mrs. Barnes ever been in India, they would at once have recognized the cry of the hunting leopard, when weary of its chain and inactivity.

There is a fear whose very intensity, paradoxical as it may seem, imparts a kind of desperate courage. Although her heart trembled at her words, Susan declared her intention of ascertaining the cause of the cry which had startled them both : that it proceeded from nothing human she felt assured.

"Where is the key of the room?" she demanded of her companion.

"My master has it," replied the old woman.

"Is there no other?"

The Widow Barnes hesitated; but her own womanly curiosity got the better of her terrors, and she confessed that there was a second key, which she had found in clearing out one of the closets, and which she felt assured would open the door of the mysterious chamber.

"But don't, for the love of heaven, be rash!" she added; "I should never forgive myself if harm should come to you, or to my master! Let him be what he may, he has been kind to me and mine!"

Despite her remonstrance, the poor girl, doubly excited by curiosity and fear, took the key from the speaker, and, lighting a candle—for she knew that the shutters of the apartment were closed—advanced fearlessly along the passage to the door: as she reached it, a low, suppressed growl struck upon her ear.

"God help me!" said the widow, "but it must be something awful! Let us return before it is too late!"

"No!" answered Susan, firmly; "were I alone concerned, I question if I should have fortitude to persevere; but the safety of my dear young lady is at stake, and it is necessary that we should know the real character of the man in whom we have confided."

The key turned in her hand as she spoke, and the door slowly opened. The scene which met her gaze might have appalled a stouter heart than the simple village girl's; for several moments she stood incapable of speech or motion, transfixed with horror.

Our readers are already aware of the nature of the Khan's pursuits—the purpose for which he had procured from the hospital, the poor-house, and the grave, so many heads to operate upon.

Several of these ghastly remnants of mortality were scattered on the ground; having served the experiment for which they had been originally obtained, they were of no further use. One, still fresh and bleeding, was fixed on the frame which we have before had occasion to describe: its glassy eyes were turned towards the door—as Susan and the widow imagined, directed towards them.

On quitting the house that very morning, the renegade had forgotten to feed the cheetah; and the hungry animal, excited, no doubt, by the odour which the sad relics of humanity exhaled, had broken its chain, to reach the disgusting banquet. The cry which had alarmed the females, was uttered by the brute as it made its last successful effort to release itself.

At the sight of living prey, the graceful creature, whose ferocious instincts were now thoroughly roused, crouched upon the ground, like a cat before it makes its spring, and began lashing its flanks with its tail. The lips were drawn tightly over its jaws,

displaying fangs which were almost as sharp as lancets; and the pupils of its eyes dilated, till they flashed like two orbs of fire upon the intruders.

Susan was fascinated with terror—as the poor, fluttering bird is supposed to be fascinated by the gaze of the Indian rattle-snake. The Widow Barnes, who was standing behind her, was the first to recover her self-possession. She saw the cheetah, slowly drawing nearer, gliding upon its belly. Just as it had measured its distance, and was about to spring on the defenceless girl, she dragged her into the passage, and dashed to the door. Another moment, and it would have been too late. They heard the bound of the animal—its fall against the door—its savage growl of disappointment—and they shrieked with terror.

Half mad with fear, even Ellen was forgotten; they rushed from the house, and ran down the narrow lane, they knew not whither—anywhere, to escape from the horror of the scene.

As they left the place, Lady Mowbray, with two female keepers, whom she had engaged from a noted asylum, for the carrying out of her cruel purpose, drove up to the cottage. The artful woman had represented that her niece was mad: not that she feared any hesitation to execute her bidding from them—they were hardened to cruelty, and willing to lend themselves to any act, provided they were paid. If such a thing as conscience existed in their callous hearts, they only knew it from its marketable value. Besides, the order of the Chancellor relieved both their employer and themselves from all fear of responsibility.

Ellen, who had heard the shrieks of the widow and Susan, as they fled from the house, although still weak and suffering, hesitated not an instant, but descended to ascertain the cause. At the bottom of the stairs, she encountered the female keepers.

"What seek you?" she inquired.

"You, most likely," was the reply.

"Me?"

"It is my niece!" exclaimed the Lady Mowbray, who had alighted at the door, and recognized the voice of her victim. "Be speedy!" she added, fearful lest any unexpected succour should mar the success of her enterprise.

Without a word, the two women laid violent hands upon Ellen, and commenced dragging her towards the carriage.

"What mean you?" exclaimed the terrified girl. "I will not be forced! Help! I have friends, who will punish this outrage!"

"So they all say," observed one of the keepers, with a grin. "Bring her along—never mind her prating!"

"Of course not!" replied her companion; "I have had too much to do with mad people, to pay attention to their ravings!"

"Hear me!" exclaimed Ellen, trying to appear calm. "I am not mad! You have been deceived by my enemies! Indeed I am not!"

"Of course, she knows better than the doctors!" observed one of the keepers.

"Or the Chancellor!" added her companion.

"Or her aunt!" resumed the first speaker, "who has taken such pains for her—poor young lady!"

Despite her resistance, the two furies succeeded in forcing the suffering girl into the carriage, where Lady Mowbray was already seated. A cold, satirical smile passed over the countenance of the heartless woman of the world, as she eyed the victim of her persecution: it was thrown away, however, upon Ellen—the poor girl had fainted.

As a precaution, she drew down the blinds of the carriage—and it was well she did so; for, at the end of the lane, the vehicle was passed by Joe Beans and the Khan: either of whom would have heeded the danger of contempt of Chancery as little as she did the reproaches of her conscience, or the opinion of the world.

Joe had just been relating to the renegade the affair with the warrener—his rescue from the rats, at Mortlake, and committal at Bow-street, upon a charge of an attempt at murder.

"Attempt at murder!" repeated his companion.

"Yes!" replied Joe; "as the man was there himself to press the charge, it could not be said that he had completed it, bad as he is!"

"Ah! you mean the lawyer?" observed the Khan, in the tone of one who suddenly recollects himself.

"Who else should I mean?" demanded Joe.

The old man remained silent.

"Do you know whether he has committed any other murder?"

Still not a word.

"I can't make thee out!" continued the speaker; "thee beest a strange being; I sometimes think there be as much evil as good in thee!"

"More," said the renegade with a sigh; "much more! I must live many, many years, before the good actions of my age can atone for the evil ones of my youth! Strange," he murmured, in an under-tone, "that the best impulses of the heart should spring from it only after it is withered!"

Joe was not much of a philosopher, but he perfectly understood the drift of the old man's speech. There was a bitterness of self-reproach in the tone in which he uttered it, that gave the rustic confidence in his honesty.

"It be the case with all of us, I suspect," he answered; "I ha' heard parson say that repentance is the fruit, and that sin be the blossom of the tree. For my part, I don't much care to have either blossoms or fruit in my garden!"

On reaching the house of the Khan, they found a group of twelve or sixteen persons collected at the door, with whom Susan was vainly disputing admission. The faithful girl, after yielding to the first natural impulse—which was to fly from the place, on

making the discovery above related—recalled that Ellen remained behind, unprotected and alone. Despite the remonstrances of her companion, she returned to share the danger of her young mistress, and, if necessary, to defend her; but nothing could induce the Widow Barnes to follow her example. She continued her flight till she reached the cottage of her nearest acquaintance, where the exaggerated accounts she gave of the horrors of the mysterious chamber were swallowed by open-mouthed credulity.

The consequence was the assembling of the knot of persons, who, confident in the presence of each other, and eager to gratify that morbid love of the horrible and strange which is the characteristic of ignorance, were demanding admission of the terrified Susan.

"No nonsense, young woman!" exclaimed a stout, bluff-looking man, whose rubicund cheeks and carbuncled nose proclaimed him a worshipper of the purple god; "we must come in: I am beadle of the parish!"

"And I constable!" added another.

"And we are here to assist!" chorused the rest.

"But there is a lady in the house, who is ill—very ill!" urged the poor girl, imploringly; "your presence will terrify her!"

"Terrify her!" repeated the beadle; "a likely story—as if a respectable parish beadle could terrify any lady! it's far more likely, poor thing, that she will hail us as her deliverers from this fearful den!"

"Of course she will; we must come in!"

This was added by the constable, who, like his brother official in the parish, was a stout, active man. Suiting the action to his words, he ascended the steps which led to the cottage; and, taking Susan in his arms, attempted to remove her from the door, but without using any unnecessary violence in so doing. It was at this moment that Joe Beans and his companion drew in sight of the house.

No sooner did the former perceive his sweetheart in the grasp of her assailant, than he sprang to her assistance. To release her, and pitch the constable headlong down the steps, was the work of an instant.

"What is that for?" demanded the fellow, as soon as he had recovered his breath, which Joe's vigorous attack had all but driven out of his body.

"To teach you manners!" replied the rustic; "first lessons are always difficult—you'll take 'em easy in time! Don't be frightened, Susan!" he added, pressing the terrified girl, who clung to him, yet closer to his manly breast. "I am here to protect you! Where is Miss Ellen?"

"In her chamber," was the answer; for she was not yet aware of the visit of Lady Mowbray in her absence, and the consequent abduction of her dear young mistress.

The appearance of the Khan did more to dissipate the crowd, than even the stout arm of the rustic. There was a cold dig-

nity in his manner—a singularity in his semi-eastern physiognomy, which awed them. As he advanced to the house, they slowly made way for him. He passed without a word, and closed the door of the cottage.

"Sorcerer!" muttered the beadle, as he disappeared.

"Worse than that!" added a cobbler, whom curiosity had drawn to the spot.

The first speaker stared, as if to ask what could be worse.

"He is a murderer!" added the man, who had heard from the Widow Barnes's own lips an exaggerated account of the scene she had witnessed in the hitherto carefully locked chamber.

Drawing a little to the side of the road, he related to the curious mob all that the old woman in her terror had stated, with such poetical additions as his own love of the marvellous suggested. On hearing his tale, the constable and beadle decided upon applying at once to a magistrate, for a warrant to apprehend him; the rest of the crowd promising to remain at a respectful distance, to watch that no one left the house.

The Khan judged, from the ill-concealed horror and fear with which Susan regarded him, the nature of the discovery which had taken place. It required all his eloquence and reasoning to disabuse her. Joe, upon his invitation, accompanied him to the room where the cheetah, now rendered furious by hunger and disappointment, was committing sad havoc amongst the scientific preparations and apparatus of its master.

If anything could have increased his companion's veneration for the renegade, it was the calm courage with which he approached the animal, whose roars subsided to low growls as its master advanced, with his eyes riveted upon him. Without the least hesitation he seized it by the collar, and, despite its struggles, dragged it to the broken chain, to which he once more fastened it. That done, he next proceeded to explain to the awe-struck Joe the meaning of the ghastly heads scattered about the apartment. When the young man perfectly comprehended his purpose, his countenance brightened with intelligence and hope.

"And do you really think," he said, "that you can restore poor old Martin to his senses?"

"I have no doubt of it," was the reply. "My only fear has been lest it should be at the expense of life. But that danger," he added, thoughtfully, "may be avoided."

Although perfectly satisfied with the explanation, Joe wished to leave the place: the grim skulls exercised a horrible species of fascination over him—he could not withdraw his gaze.

"Come," he said, "let us return to the kitchen, where we have left Susan."

No sooner did they make their appearance, than the agitated girl threw herself upon the neck of her lover in a passion of

grief, and exclaimed, with tears and broken sobs:

"Forgive me—oh, forgive me!"

"Forgive thee, Susan!" said the young man. "Forgive thee! for what? for being frightened?"

"Ellen—poor Miss Ellen!" she whispered.

Joe's countenance became as pale as death.

"Do speak," said her lover; anything is better than doubt!"

"She is gone!" she faltered; "fallen into the hands of her enemies!"

"Gone!" repeated Joe; "and through my fault! I ought not to have left her side for an instant. Gone—and Master Harry on his way back! Harry—who trusted to me to protect her, to watch over her—the truest friend man ever had! I shall never be able to look him in the face again!"

In the bitterness of his disappointment, he buried his face in his hands, to hide the tears which, despite his manhood, marked how bitterly he felt.

The Khan appeared scarcely less overwhelmed than himself; a painful struggle seemed to be taking place within his breast; in a few moments, however, his countenance became calm and settled. Placing his hand upon the shoulder of his companion, he bid him hope.

"Come what may," he said, "I will yet restore her to you!"

"You?"

"I! You have the word of one who never promised lightly, or failed to keep the pledge he gave!"

CHAPTER XXII.

There is a bond between us, sir, which makes
One common danger or one common safety;
For the same roaring sea which wrecks my bark,
Ingulfis yours, too.

OLD PLAY.

It had been previously decided between Meeran Hafaz and his unworthy accomplice, Colonel Mowbray, that in the event of Ellen being once more in their power, they should, without further delay, proceed to Carrow Abbey—the last place in which her defenders would expect to find her. The secluded situation of the old mansion, and the evil reports believed by the superstitious country people, rendered anything like unpremeditated intrusion improbable. Against legal interference they were guarded by the order of the Chancellor—and open violence they were equally prepared to meet.

The two confederates were seated in the library of the colonel, anxiously awaiting the arrival of the messenger who was to bring them intelligence of the success of Lady Mowbray's scheme. The countenance of the young Indian, once so calm and passionless, bore traces of the violent emotions of jealousy, doubt, and disappointment which had lately agitated him.

"Once more mine," he murmured, "and I will trust to no other eyes to watch, or

arms to guard her! I have been weak, colonel—weak as a child—and suffered foolish pity to unman me—henceforth she shall find my resolution cold as her own heart—firm as its prejudices against me!"

"She has indeed been most ungrateful," observed his convenient friend, "as well as blind to her own interests. Such a brilliant match! such very liberal settlements! I scarcely know a name in the whole peerage which would have refused them!"

"Perish such considerations!" exclaimed the young man, indignantly; "it is the very disinterestedness of her nature which adds such fuel to my passion—I never yet valued the smile that gold could buy!"

"Dreamer!" muttered the colonel, with a sneering smile.

"If I am a dreamer," continued Meoran, "let me dream on still! I have a faith in woman—call it idolatry, if you will—peculiar to myself. Even the love of Ellen would cease to attract me if my wealth could purchase it! I pine for it," he added, "as the adventurous traveller pines to explore the cloud-capped tops of the lofty mountains of my native land—on account of the glory and the difficulty. I would win—not buy her!"

"And failing to win?" interrupted his friend.

"Will take by force," replied the Indian, gloomily, "that which is denied to entreaty! I must place a bar between her and this accursed peasant slave, who has crossed my heart in the only hope it ever framed! When next we meet, the fate of Ellen and my own will be decided!"

A servant entered the room with a note upon a salver, which he handed to his master, who hastily broke the seal, and having cast his eyes over the contents, handed it, with a triumphant air, to his visitor.

It contained only a few hurried lines from her ladyship, informing her husband of the success of their plan—that Ellen was once more in her power, and that both were on their way to Carrow, whither the writer recommended the colonel and Meoran to follow as quickly as possible.

"You may leave the room, James," said the master of the mansion, addressing the servant; "there is no answer."

The man hesitated.

"What is the matter?" he added.

"Nothing, sir; only that another messenger has arrived from Newgate and wishes to see the rajah."

Although Meera Hafaz was not entitled to that rank, it was the name by which he was generally spoken of in the household of Colonel Mowbray.

This was the second application which the warrener had made for an interview with his employer.

With muttered curses, wrung from him by impatience, Meera Hafaz directed the domestic to inform the messenger that he would visit the prison that very day.

"Will you accompany me?" he demanded of his friend, as soon as the man had left the room.

"Perhaps I had better not."

The young Indian looked offended by the reply.

"I neither *know*, nor do I wish to be *informed*," continued the colonel, "of the *nature* of the tie between you and my late brother's servant; doubtless you have found him useful, and if it lies in your power to serve him in any way, I would counsel you to do so."

"As useful as you did," observed the young man, bitterly, "when you and Captain Lucas employed the rascal to spread the report of the late baronet having killed a political opponent in a duel, and being compelled to fly to France for his life—which falsehood induced the deceived and unhappy wife to intrust herself and infant to the care of a false friend!"

The colonel turned very pale, and muttered something about Will Sideler being a worthless villain.

"Come, come," continued Meoran, "rail not against the poor devil! Men, after all, are what necessity, and the virtues or vices of those above them, make them. I will soon return from my visit to Newgate, and then we will start at once for Carrow Abbey; there I shall triumph over my rustic rival, and reap the rich reward of my long-enduring passion and perseverance!"

"Or of thy crimes!" muttered his confederate, as the door of the apartment closed between them. I am tired—galled by the lordly airs of superiority this fellow gives himself, and willingly would—but—no—no!" he added, with a shudder, as he recollects the fatal confession he had signed, in which he acknowledged himself a cheat and a swindler; "he would blast my reputation, and render even the wealth I have sinned for worthless! I have paid the penalty, and will not, like an idiot, forego the enjoyment!"

With this resolution he rang for his valet, to give orders for his departure for Norfolk; for, convinced by reflection that it would be useless to struggle with the toils in which, at the commencement of their acquaintance, Meoran had bound him, he felt only anxious to complete the price of his redemption, by forcing the unprotected orphan to his arms.

Will Sideler had not been many hours an inmate of Newgate—to which prison the magistrate had committed him, upon the charge of robbing and attempting to murder Mr. Elworthy—when he began to entertain those uneasy sensations which indicate a conscience ill at ease. Great as the terrors were which he endured in his subterranean den at Mortlake, the mental ones which now came thronging upon him were yet greater; and more than once he asked himself the question, which one half of mankind ask only when too late—whether honesty, after all, is not the best policy, even in this world. True, for a man in his position, he was rich, possessed of more gold than at one period of his life he dreamed was in existence. He could buy land—houses, waving corn-fields and woods

might call him master. Every enjoyment his gross, sensual nature could desire was within his means ; but there was a drawback to this reflection—a dark and terrible one—that the possessor of this gold was a prisoner within dark stone walls, with an accusation affecting his life suspended over him.

His first feeling was of anger that he had not completed his work, and really taken the life of the lawyer ; his second, of regret that he had ever undertaken the task at all.

"Would he were anything but a lawyer!" he thought ; "lawyers are like priests—they never forgive! This fellow, whose brain-pan I could crush with a blow of my fist, will never rest till he has brought it home to me! The judge will be a lawyer—I shall have hard work to escape between them!"

In his danger he remembered Meeran Hafaz : he knew his vast wealth, and standing with those who could save him ; and as his yielding to his temptation had brought him into difficulties, he determined that he should find the means to save him.

"He must," he said, "or we both swing together! I was always of a sociable disposition, and should not like to hang alone!"

Such were the feelings with which he twice sent to request an interview with the young Indian. Disappointment at his not obeying his first summons, added to his recent sufferings, made him ferocious and sullen—in fact, so much so, that he scarcely deigned to notice his visitor, when he entered the cell in which he was confined.

"So you are come at last!" he muttered, savagely.

"Ruffian!" said the young man ; is this your gratitude for my condescension in visiting you in prison?"

At the words "ruffian" and "condescension," the eyes of Will Sideler flashed fearfully upon the speaker : perhaps he remembered whose temptation had placed him in his present danger—or still writhed under the recollection of the severe chastisement he had received.

"Ruffian!" he exclaimed. "Well, I suppose I must not quarrel with the name, since we bear it equally from the same god-father! But as for gratitude : I feel no gratitude for your doing that which I could have compelled you to do, whether you liked it or not!"

"What means the insolent ——"

"Insolent!" interrupted Will ; there are a pair of insolents! and, since you feel so little for the position to which your bribes, temptations, and crimes—ay, sir, crimes, for they were yours even more than mine—have reduced me, I'll tell you what I'll do : I'll send, the first thing in the morning, to Mr. Elworthy!"

"Well?"

"Confess everything to him!"

"Go on!"

"Even to the death of Sir William Mowbray!"

"And then hang like a dog!" quietly observed Meeran Hafaz, without betraying the least alarm at the threats of his confederate.

"No matter—I shall not hang alone!"

"There, again, you are mistaken!" continued the young Indian ; "there is not one jot of evidence against me, except your word, which no one will believe! I am rich, have friends high in power, and instruments ready to swear to anything I may suggest ; so you see, after all, Will, the probability is that you must hang alone!"

It was curious to observe, whilst the speaker was thus addressing the instrument of his crimes, how the bold and insulting look of the ruffian gradually changed to one of cringing servility and utter hopelessness, as the conviction took possession of his mind that the wily tempter was beyond his power.

"No matter!" he said, trying to put a bold face upon the difficulty ; "at least, such an accusation will blast your reputation!"

"Not in the least, my good man!" coolly answered Meeran.

"Detain you in London at the very moment you are desirous of quitting it, to accomplish your purpose against Miss De Vere! I wonder," he added, with a shudder, "how you can bear to look upon her!"

Although his visitor had affected to treat the menaces of the prisoner as unworthy of the slightest consideration, he was secretly moved by them : he had been long enough in England to be perfectly aware that the law, in certain cases—such as murder, struck the strongest in its might, and was not to be tampered with ; that, even if he eventually escaped the penalty of his crime, it would only be after trial and imprisonment ; and he gradually suffered himself to relent.

"Sidefer," he said, "were I the heartless man you think, I should leave you to your fate! Me you cannot assail ; and I naturally felt indignant at your conduct, after having resolved to risk everything to insure your safety."

At the word "safety," the eyes of the warrener began to brighten.

"Yes, continued the speaker, "had your conduct been such as I had a right to expect, in three days you would have been at liberty ; but, as it is ——"

"You will not abandon me," interrupted the wretch, "for a hasty word, spoken in despair? I fancied you had forgotten me! Could you but feel, for one hour, the horrors of captivity—the fearful thoughts which crowd upon the inmates of these walls, as they count the weary hours of sleepless night—the terrible dreams which haunt them, when worn-out Nature at last takes refuge in a broken sleep—you would pardon my impatience—pity, and not upbraid me!"

"I do pardon you."

"And you will save me?"

"And I will save you!" replied Meeran ;

"but not, as you suppose, from any personal considerations—I have already told you that I am above them. In three days you shall be at liberty, but you must consent to quit the country."

"Willingly!"

"For ever!"

"For ever!" repeated Sideler; "I have little to love or to regret in it: I don't believe I have even a dog to care for me!"

"Enough!" answered Meeran, arising to depart; "to-morrow you will receive a visit from your father!"

"My father!" repeated the captive, with astonishment.

"One, at least, who must pass as such: follow the directions which he will give you, and trust to me to accomplish the rest. Once at liberty, you must traverse France till you reach Marseilles, where you will find ship bound to India."

"India, or any other land!" sighed the wretch; "all countries are to me alike indifferent."

Drawing out his purse, his visitor inquired if he wanted any money.

For once the yellow idol had lost its influence upon the heart of the captive.

"Gold!" he exclaimed; "it has been my bane—my curse! My conscience is loaded with it! I would give it all—all that I possess—for one calm night of peaceful sleep!"

Finding that, in his present state of mind, his visit could be of no further use, the tempter left him to himself.

"Will he keep his word?" thought the prisoner, as soon as he was alone. "He must—he dares not break it: despite the pride and defiance with which he listened to my threats, 'tis plain he feels their force. I was right, quite right!" he added; "either we will both be saved, or swing together!"

With this resolution, he seated himself upon the stool, near the window of his cell, and became buried in reflection.

When Meeran Hafaz returned to the residence of the Colonel, he found everything in readiness for their journey to Carrow Abbey. To the surprise of his friend, he informed him that he had changed his intention.

"Changed it!" exclaimed his confederate, with astonishment.

"Yes. In three days I shall be at liberty to accompany you; but I cannot quit London till then."

The Colonel inquired no further, but gave orders to unpack the carriage; knowing his visit to Newgate, most probably he guessed the nature of the business which detained him.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The sword is tempered to the soldier's hand;
The drug is mixed to arm a woman's weakness;
The law hath quibbles for the miser's gain;
And every crime its ready instrument.

HERMIONE.

THERE are hundreds of men in London, calling themselves agents, who would be much puzzled to give an account of the na-

ture of the business they transact. They neither buy nor sell—and yet they live. Some profess to be lawyers, although they never prepared a single brief: others, bill-brokers, who profess their readiness to cash the acceptances of thoughtless heirs to any amount, without having the means, perhaps, of paying the rent of their scantily-furnished offices.

The only stock in trade of the greater part of the class of men we allude to, consists, like the spider's, of their *web*—spun from the venom of their brain—as that of the insect's is from glutinous resources, provided by nature for that purpose, in their bodies. They are a race of beings to whom honor is a forgotten name—who consider crime only in proportion to its risk, and, provided the insurance be large, are ready to risk everything to obtain it.

One of the most celebrated of this class was an old man, of a most venerable appearance, who was generally supposed to have made a considerable fortune—how, it would have puzzled an honest trader to tell; for William Davids kept neither books nor merchandise, was particularly careful in discounting, and had never been seen upon 'Change.

The old deaf woman, who, for more than thirty years, had kept his chambers at Clement's Inn, when questioned upon the subject by his curious neighbors, used to declare that he seldom had more than one or two visitors per week. It was known that he seldom went out: so the inquirers naturally concluded that those one or two customers were good ones.

If paying well made them good ones, they were not much out in their calculation.

To this person did Meeran Hafaz resolve to address himself, and, on the evening of the day on which he had visited the warden in his prison, he set out, alone and on foot, to visit him.

The old man was seated at a small round table, in the dismal little room he called his office, examining, by the light of a solitary candle, various papers and memoranda, written partially in hieroglyphics, scattered before him. They were the reports of the instruments he employed in the various transactions in which he was engaged. A wiry-haired, resolute-looking man was standing near him. It was his confidential tool, known by the name of Tyburn Ned.

"What has become of the infant?" demanded his master.

"Safe in the work-house."

"And no suspicions?"

"None. I took care to change its clothing of lace and cambric for the coarsest rags."

"Right!" said the master, making a note; "that affair is settled!"

"And the captain?"

"Over the water!"

"At last!" sighed old Davids, with satisfaction. "That fellow has given me more trouble than profit. Let him know that if he returns, it will be useless to expect any

further assistance from me—a bungler! He may hang or starve, for aught I care!"

His observations were cut short by a ringing at the bell.

"See who is at the door," said the speaker; "but do not open it."

Ned left the room, and in a few minutes returned, after having reconnoitered the visitor through the little iron grating at the door.

"Well, who is it?" demanded the old man, sharply.

"Don't know," replied the fellow; "but you had better see him. He is no ordinary visitor: he might be a prince, from his air."

"How is he dressed?"

"In a large Spanish cloak, drawn closely round him. I could see upon the hand with which he held it, partially to conceal his face, a diamond as large as that which—"

"Enough!" interrupted the agent hastily; probably not wishing to hear anything more about the diamond which the speaker particularly alluded to. "You may admit him."

The next minute, Meeran Hafaz was ushered into the dimly-lighted apartment. Ned officially placed a chair, but before the young man condescended to sit upon it, he abruptly demanded of the old man to dismiss his servant.

"Go," said Davids, mildly, to his confederate, "and attend to the shipping of those goods!"

This was a cant phrase agreed upon between them, when Tyburn Ned was to dog the steps of any visitor, and bring word back where he resided; for many who sought the assistance of the old man, cared little to leave either their names or addresses.

"Now, sir," he continued, as soon as they were alone, "your pleasure?"

Had the young Indian not been well aware of the real character of the man with whom he had to deal, he would have hesitated before he replied to him; his appearance was so truly venerable, and everything around him bearing the impress of respectability.

"Is your name William Davids?" he demanded.

"It is."

"An agent?"

"A general agent, at your service," observed the man with a smile.

"I have heard of you, Mr. Davids," resumed his visitor; "of your skill and determination in conducting the affairs of those who place themselves in your hands. I have heard that there is no difficulty, no matter how grave or delicate, which you will not undertake to arrange?"

"Provided the payment equals the risk and trouble, none."

"And what payment?" inquired Meeran, in the blandest tone of voice imaginable, "would you conceive sufficient to undertake the escape of a prisoner from Newgate, within three days."

"Three days! The time is short," said the agent, musingly.

"I am aware of that."

"Of what is the man accused?"

"Of murder."

"Of murder!" slowly repeated the old man, with the air of one carefully weighing the risk. "It will be difficult."

"Had the thing been easy," observed his visitor, "I should not have required the assistance of so experienced a person as yourself. The station of the man for whom I interest myself is humble in the extreme; but that is not the question. Perhaps," he added, "it may lessen the difficulty, when I inform you the murder was only attempted—not completed."

"Not in the least, sir," replied the man of many secrets; "the proceedings will not only be difficult, as I before observed to you, but expensive."

"I am prepared to meet it."

"So many risks to run!" added the agent, who was mentally considering how much he might venture to ask.

"Your price, sir—your price?"

"Five thousand pounds!"

No sooner had the old fellow named this sum than he fixed his little ferret-like eyes upon his visitor, with an anxious look, to watch the effect his words produced.

"It is yours," said Meeran, coolly.

Instead of feeling rejoiced at the acquisition of so important a client, the wretch secretly cursed himself for having asked so little.

"Here," said the young man, drawing a note for five hundred pounds from his pocket-book, "is an earnest. I will call at the same hour to-morrow night, when you will report progress—your plans and means: if I find them feasible, the present sum shall be doubled. Is the arrangement understood between us?"

"Perfectly, sir," answered the agent, eagerly clutching the note, which he held close to the solitary candle, to assure himself that it was a good one. "I will have all my plans matured by then; but before I take any steps, it is positively necessary that I should know the name of the—hem! did you say gentleman?"

"I thought I told you," observed the young man, "that his station was humble?"

"You did—I had forgotten."

"His name is Will Sideler!"

"Will Sideler!" repeated the avaricious old wretch, with a look of surprise; "dear me—how very extraordinary!"

"How, extraordinaire?"

"I have already had an inquiry respecting him."

The speaker, in fact, was the very person to whom Captain Elton had confided the will of Sir William Mowbray, in order to get it copied.

"Some time since," continued the agent, "a client of mine placed in my hands the will of the late baronet, as security for a large sum of money."

"The name of this client?" eagerly demanded Meeran Hafaz.

"Captain Elton."

"And the sum?"

"One thousand pounds."

The wretch eagerly watched the countenance of his visitor, to note the effect produced. He was fearful of asking too much—and still more so of losing the chance of augmenting his ill-gotten store by demanding too little.

"Have you the document by you?"

"I have not," replied the agent; "but I can easily procure it."

This was a lie; but he knew by experience there was nothing so likely to insure the success of his scheme as exciting the impatience of the young man by pretended difficulties.

"When can you procure it?" inquired Meieran.

"To-morrow."

"Have it ready, and the sum you name is yours!"

A quiet, sly smile illuminated the countenance of the agent: he had made a good night's work of him.

A few such clients would have made any man rich.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A den of common villains—men who sell Their very souls for bread—whose cheeks have lost
The blush of honest shame—crime's agents, And its victims.

OLD PLAY.

WILKES, of *North Briton* notoriety, made one observation which, from its profound philosophy as well as humanity, deserves to be remembered, when the party struggles in which he bore so prominent a figure are forgotten—it was:

"That the worst use you can make of a man is to hang him."

Modern legislators seem gradually awakening to a sense of the force of this important truth; prison discipline is reduced to something like system: the chaplain and schoolmaster have been introduced, and it is to be hoped that in time they will supersede the necessity for the turnkey.

Thirty years ago, Newgate presented a far different aspect to the orderly, well-regulated establishment of the present day. The rich felon was permitted to pass the brief space which intervened between committal and trial, in the most degrading debauchery—reason and conscience were alike drowned in the wine-cup. The poor one, on the contrary, found in prison, as in the world, that poverty was considered as his greatest crime.

The gaolers, who made considerable additions to their incomes by selling or conning at the introduction of beer, spirits, and tobacco, for their prisoners, fawned upon those who had money, till their last guinea was spent. Blows, oaths, and harsh treatment were reserved for those who lacked the means of gratifying their avarice: they were considered as vulgar, petty-larceny rogues—fellows without spirit or prudence to provide against a rainy day.

The felons' day-room resembled more the

parlour or tap of some notorious tavern, than a place of confinement for criminals. Singing, gambling and drinking were the order of the place. The chair and vice-chair were generally taken by some expert burglar or highwayman, whose reputation—for even crime has its aristocracy—entitled them to such an honour. The turnkeys, when off duty, shared their orgies; and blasphemy and revelry were often heard, where penitence alone should breathe the prayer which, from the stricken, contrite heart, is never breathed in vain.

Till the visit of Meeran Hafaz to the prison, Will Sideler had remained a voluntary inmate of his cell. The enormity of the crime of which he was accused, made him an object of interest with his fellow-prisoners, and a fit subject of speculation to the rapacious turnkeys. Although several times invited by the president of the society to join them in the day-room, he had sullenly declined. The shadow of the repenting angel's wing was over him. The presence of his tempter, and the promise he held out to him, had scared it—he began to tire of the companionship of his thoughts: to get rid of them, he descended to the felons' yard.

Amongst the inmates of the place, was a thin, wiry, iron-featured, bilious-looking old man, who was generally known by the name of Mike. It was never properly understood whether he was a prisoner awaiting trial, or one serving out his time. The turnkeys evidently attached but little importance to his safe custody—for they permitted him to pass from the common yard to the porter's lodge without a word; he came and went as he pleased: some supposed him a spy, others a superannuated officer of the prison.

Everybody seemed to know him; even the governor, as he made his daily round, would occasionally nod to him—which was considered an act of condescension from so important a personage, who seldom deigned to notice his subordinates.

Mike was no less singular in tastes and manner than person—generally speaking, he shunned rather than sought society: in the day-room, he appeared more as an observer than a guest; and if ever he did unbend, it was in favour of some notorious criminal, whom justice had already marked for a last terrible example.

Another peculiarity was, that every Tuesday—which, in the days of George III., was the regular hanging-day—the old man seldom made his appearance in the yard or day-room until late, and then he seemed more taciturn than usual. The governor, on such melancholy occasions, it was understood, permitted him, as an especial favour, to be present in the press-room.

In fact, he was one of those beings in whom humanity had very little sympathy or part—like Cain, it seemed to have rejected him; he lived and moved amongst his fellow-men alone.

Mike was walking close to the wall, on

the sunny side of the prison-yard, when Sideler descended ; a short pipe, from which at irregular intervals he puffed the sedative weed, was firmly stuck between his discolored, mummy-like lips.

The dress of this peripatetic philosopher—for Mike was a philosopher in his way—consisted of a rusty suit of black, not one article of which, apparently, had been made for him. The cuffs of the tight-fitting sleeve of the narrow, swallow-tailed coat scarcely reached the wrist : this gave an additional length to his thin, long, bony hand, whose fingers reminded one of the claws of a vulture—there was a sort of natural crook in them. The waistcoat had evidently been taken in under the delusion that it could be made to fit him ; and his breeches, which buckled considerably below the knees over a pair of coarse, speckled worsted stockings, were as Shakspere expresses it, “a world too wide for his shrunk shanks.”

A broad-brimmed hat, with a band of faded crape round it, drawn closely over his bushy brows, completed the old man’s costume.

Many had been the speculations amongst the prisoners, when they noted the crumpled bit of crape around the hat of Mike, who such a being could possibly mourn for.

As these two men passed each other in their walk, the warrener observed that the smoker eyed him with peculiar interest. His manner at last became so marked, that the ruffian began to feel offended.

“What does the fool take me for?” he murmured to himself. “No matter, I’ll soon put an end to his staring!”

With this intention the speaker, the next time they met, suddenly stopped, and, fixing his eyes upon Mike, scowled menacingly upon him : an action which seemed rather to amuse than irritate the old man, who noticed it merely by a cold, cynical smile, and a scarcely perceptible drawing-down of the corners of his thin lips, which gave them a mocking expression.

Sideler shuddered : he thought he had never seen so terrible, so menacing a smile before, and his insolent gaze sank beneath the serpent-like eyes fixed upon him.

The very silence of the encounter made it the more oppressive—and he determined to break it.

“Do you know me?” he said.

“Not yet!” answered Mike, his countenance instantly losing its peculiar expression ; “but no doubt we shall become more *intimately acquainted!*”

“I think not!” observed the ruffian, with affected carelessness ; “my stay in Newgate will be very short!”

“True! true!” quietly assented the old man ; “the session is near at hand!”

“Then I shall be the sooner at liberty!” exclaimed Will.

His new acquaintance looked incredulous.

“I tell you,” continued the speaker, “that I am here through a mistake! A

rascally old lawyer, who got more frightened than hurt, imagines that I am the man who attacked and robbed him! It’s my belief,” he added, “that the old fool was never robbed at all, and that he has only trumped up this charge to spite me! Fortunately I can prove an *alibi!*”

“It’s bad dealing with lawyers!” said Mike, after a few moments’ reflection. “I scarcely ever knew a gentleman escape, when once they fairly got him into their clutches ; and Lawyer Elworthy is uncommonly shrewd!”

“Elworthy!” repeated the villain, with astonishment.

“Ay, the man you robbed, and all but murdered—at least as he asserts!”

“And how the deuce did you know his name?” demanded the ruffian, unable to conceal his surprise.

“Read it in the charge-book, in the lodge,” was the reply.

“Then you are not a prisoner,” observed Sideler.

“But I am, though!” answered his acquaintance ; “only as my time is nearly up, they pay no attention to me, but let me run about the place as I like : they know I have no temptation to quit it!”

His hearer looked very much as if he had, and a very strong temptation. Newgate was not at all to his liking : not that he thought the place so bad in itself ; it was the *mode of exit* which troubled him.

“Can’t you return home?” he said.

“Home!” ejaculated the man in rusty black ; “it is many a long year since I knew the meaning of the word! Home implies friends, relations, children, wife. Now I have not a living being belonging to me. I have lived so long in prison, that I should like to die here—be buried here ! I should never feel at my ease anywhere else!”

These singular feelings and opinions puzzled the warrener : he could not comprehend them, and naturally felt curious to ascertain the nature of the crime which had made the speaker for so many years the inmate of a prison.

“Oh, nothing—a mere trifle, scarcely worth speaking of!” answered the old man ; “the fact is, it occurred so long ago, I scarcely remember it. Hark!” he added, as a loud burst of merriment broke from the prisoners in the day-room ; “the captain is at his old jokes again!”

“And who is the captain?”

“One of the most successful and daring forgers of the day. He has passed as many bank flimsies as would have made the fortune of any moderate man ; but, as the saying is, ‘light come light go.’ A girl whom he promised to marry has sold him. He is sure to swing at the next session.

Sideler shuddered, but could not avoid expressing a desire to see the man who, with such a doom impending over him, could still find mirth and jest to set the table in a roar. Upon expressing this desire to his companion, Mike offered to accompany him to the day-room, adding, by way

of recommendation, that it would prevent the time from hanging heavily upon his hands.

The offer was accepted. The prisoner had got over the first sensation of repugnance which he felt towards his new companion; in fact, he almost began to like him.

The day-room was a long, narrow apartment upon the ground floor of the prison, which received light from four narrow, grated windows, in a line with the door.—The walls, which had originally been whitewashed, were discolored by smoke, and names celebrated in the annals of Newgate were written with the smoke of a candle upon the ceiling, or scrawled with charcoal.

At a long oaken table in the centre of the den, between twenty and thirty men were seated, of various ages and physiognomies—from the abashed stripling who had made his first step in crime, to the hoary-headed ruffian whom habit had made familiar with it. Two of the turnkeys, who were off duty, were present.

At the upper end of the table was a tall, gentlemanly-looking man, about forty-five. His countenance was flushed with the wine he had been drinking—probably to drown reflection; for occasionally recollection would bring to mind the dark and hideous future—the impending trial—the condemned cell, and the execution. At such moments the expression of his eye became wild and fearful, and he had recourse to the intoxicating draught which drowns memory in insanity.

The arrival of the new-comers was received with a shout of welcome.

Sideler and his companion would have quietly seated themselves at the lower end of the table, but the president prevented them.

"This way, gentlemen!" he exclaimed, accompanying his words with a graceful flourish of the hand. "No false modesty, if you please! Pickpockets and petty-larceny rogues—fellows in *statu populari*—below the salt; *masters of arts* above it!"

The point of this allusion was lost upon the wretches present, but it proved that the speaker had at least been trained with the prospect of better things than ending his career upon the scaffold.

The coarse songs, wit and humor of the scene exactly suited the disposition of the warrener, who began to feel a degree of pride in the distinction which the enormity of his crime procured him. His eye glanced freely round the board, and he began to return the nods and winks of the felons with an air as reckless and a spirit as light as their own.

"Who is the captain?" he demanded, in a whisper, of his companion, who seemed perfectly at home in the place.

"His name is Forbes," replied the old man. "He was educated for the church, but took to the road; then became a forger. His career is nearly run."

"He will die game!" observed the warrener, with a look of admiration.

"Humph!" ejaculated Mike, doubtfully; "can't say: I generally find the quiet, sullen ones die best!"

"*You find them!*" repeated Sideler, eyeing him as if an unpleasant suspicion had crossed his mind.

"Yes," observed his companion. "I get into the press-room at every execution; it's the only amusement I find in the place!"

At the word "amusement," an involuntary shudder ran through the veins of Will Sideler, and the feeling of repugnance which he experienced when he first encountered his strange companion, returned.

The private conversation was interrupted by the president calling upon Mike for a song.

"You know I seldom sing," observed the old man, meekly: a declaration which was received with vociferous laughter, and loud calls for "The Ravens."

"The Ravens!" repeated Sideler; "I never heard it: what sort of a song do you call that?"

"The song of the gallows-tree," replied his companion, giving two or three preparatory "hems," by way of clearing his throat. "I suppose I must comply: I shouldn't like to disoblige either the captain or you!"

There was a leering expression, half mocking, half-cynical, on the countenance of the speaker, which set the warrener thinking: his suspicions, if he entertained any, were dissipated by the song of the speaker.

A raven was perched on the gallows-tree,
The wild storm howled o'er the blasted heath,
As the fiends were keeping their revelry—
A parrocide swung in chains beneath.

The raven's beak and claws they were red
With the clotted gore of the sinful dead.

"Ho! ho!" said the bird, and the deep words broke
With a chuckling sound, 'twixt a laugh and a croak;

"They cry we shall soon lack our dainty cheer—
That food will grow scant and scantier here!
I am old, I am wise—and heed not what they say—
That the raven and gibbet will e'er want their prey!"

Two ravens were perched on the gallows-tree:
"Say, son," said the first, "where thy course
hath been?

What tidings of mankind bringest thou me?
And what hast thou heard and what hast thou
seen?"

"Of religion I heard the parson preach.
Of justice and law the schoolmaster teach.
I laughed, for I saw that their task would be vain,
Whilst they hated each other like Abel and
Cain."

"Fear not," said the old bird clearing his throat,
With a chuckling sound 'twixt a laugh and a croak,
"While they each, like two fools, pull a different
way,

That the raven and gibbet will e'er lack their prey!"

Three ravens were perched on the gallows-tree:
"Say, son," said the first, "where thy course
hath been?

What tidings of mankind bringest thou me?
And what hast thou heard, and what hast thou
seen?"

"I've seen," groaned the bird, "their task in the
land,

The priest and schoolmaster pursue hand-in-hand:
Since they ceased acting by contrary rules,
Prisons are turning, I fear, into schools."

"Ho! ho!" cried the raven; but this time there
broke

No chuckling sound, but a mournful croak ;
“ I am off—I am off—for heed well what I say—
That the raven and gibbet will soon lack their prey !”

A round of vociferous applause followed the conclusion of the song. The singer received it with that modest confidence which intimated that he felt it to be his due, and Will Sideler, in his turn, was called upon—as the vice-chairman, a prig of low degree, observed—to promote the *harmony* of the *hevering*.

“ It must be when he comes back, then !” said a stout, burly-looking personage, who made his appearance in the day-room ; “ his father wants to see him !”

The information was received with a shout of laughter.

“ His *wenerable* father !” repeated a pickpocket at the lower end of the table ; “ I thought he was a *horfan* !” an observation which provoked a broad grin from those who, like the speaker, sat below the salt ; those above it condescendingly noticed it by a patronizing smile.

“ Tibbs,” said the chairman, who was a stickler for etiquette—“ it strikes me that you are inclined to grow familiar !”

The warrener knew too well the importance of the interview, to delay for an instant following the messenger. Instead of the shame and humiliation with which a son, under such circumstances, would be supposed to meet his parent, a smile of triumph lit the flushed countenance of the speaker, and he left the room with a firm, confident look.

Mike, who had been closely observing him, muttered to himself, as his new acquaintance left the room, that the visitor was not the prisoner’s father.

When the warrener followed the turnkey to his cell, he found an old man of most venerable appearance, whose dust-covered shoes and travel-stained garments denoted that he had arrived from a long and weary journey. The face of the impostor—for such he was—was deeply furrowed with wrinkles ; silver locks were thinly scattered over his sunburnt brow. Any one, to have gazed upon him, would have taken him for some simple rustic, whose life had been passed in the fields, in honest labour—far from the world, its strife and passions.

Thirty years at least had elapsed since the sanctified old rascal had seen a green field, or quitted the purlieus of London.

The heart-broken parent, so cleverly got up for the occasion, was no other than William Davids, the general agent.

“ My son—my son !” exclaimed the old wretch, with a well acted burst of grief, at the same time throwing himself upon the neck of the warrener ; “ you will bring my white hairs with shame and sorrow to the grave ! Alack—alack !” he added, looking round the cell with disgust ; “ to think that after so many years of separation, we should meet in such a place !”

“ It’s no use crying after the funeral is gone !” observed the prisoner, with difficulty repressing a grin.

“ You expected me ?” whispered Davids,

as he pressed the robust form of the warrener still closer to him.

“ All right !” replied Sideler, in the same under-tone.

It was one of the prison regulations, although imperfectly observed, that one of the turnkeys should be present at the interviews between the prisoners and their friends. The man who had conducted the agent to the cell of his pretended son, foreseeing that the interview would most probably be a tedious one, drew a short pipe from his pocket, and began to smoke.

“ I must speak with you alone,” said the agent, in an under-tone.

“ Shall I bribe him ?”

“ No—no !”

“ Send him for liquor ?”

“ It would not do !” replied his visitor, in a whisper ; “ I have it ! leave him to me !”

“ What do you intend to do ?”

“ Pray !” said the wretch, with a twinkle of his small, gray eye, which denoted how much he enjoyed the joke ; there is *not one of them can stand that !*”

Sinking upon his knees, the arch-hypocrite began a long supplication to the Divine Being—whose majesty he was impiously mocking—to touch the heart of his son : from the fluency with which he proceeded, it was evident that he had either previously studied his part, or was gifted with no ordinary command of language.

The turnkey, at the commencement of the prayer, slowly sauntered towards the door of the cell, and looked down the long, dark corridor with a listless air. His indifference, as the agent proceeded, gradually changed to impatience, which he expressed by smoking violently, and uneasily shuffling with his feet.

Still the visitor showed no symptoms of concluding.

“ Hang the fellow !” muttered the officer ; “ he is more tedious than Holy Joe” —the cant name of the chaplain. “ It is bad enough to be compelled to listen to his drawing tones on a Sunday ! I may as well drop into the day-room, and see what is going on there !”

With this conclusion, the speaker sanntered to the end of the corridor, and crossed the yard.

The instant Will Sideler heard his receding step, he attempted to start to his feet, but the hand and expressive glance of Davids restrained him : the fellow continued in a yet louder voice, till well assured that the man was out of hearing.

“ Don’t be impatient,” he said, rising from his knees, “ or you will spoil all ! slow and certain, is my motto ! Is this your cell ?”

“ It is !”

“ Is the door at the end of the passage barred at night ?”

“ And doubly locked,” answered the warrener.

The agent reflected for a moment : the difficulty did not appear to have much

weight with him, for he alluded to it no more.

"In this packet," he said, thrusting a small parcel into the hands of the prisoner, "you will find instructions how to proceed. There are four spring-saws : I suppose you know how to use them?"

The warrener smiled, as he concealed the packet in his bosom, at the simplicity of such a question.

"I should think I did!"

"I shall come and see you every day," added the old man, "and give you further instructions. One word of advice—trust no one : as long as you remain the master of your secret, it is your servant ; once reveal it, and you become its slave."

In the hurried conversation which followed, the agent detailed his plan for the escape of the prisoner, which, as it must necessarily be developed in the action of our tale, it is scarcely necessary to relate here : enough to say that it was bold and feasible.

"You understand?" he said.

"Perfectly!"

"And think your courage will not fail?"

"Not if the gallows were erected," replied the ruffian, with insolent bravado, "and the rope about my neck!"

Mr. Davids gazed upon the speaker with a look of admiration : like most men who, from want of physical courage, rely upon stratagem for the accomplishment of their designs, he had a profound veneration for brute force.

"You must have many friends?" he observed.

The warrener nodded, as much as to say that he was already aware of that important fact.

"And rich ones—eh?"

"Pretty well for that : some of them," added the ruffian, with a cynical expression, which elevated him yet higher in the opinion of his visitor, "are so fond of me, that they would not let me even swing alone!"

The low chuckle which followed the observation of the speaker, assured him that it was properly appreciated.

When the turnkey, who had been absent nearly an hour, returned, he found the pretended father and son seated together, each clasping the other's hand. They had heard his heavy step in the stone-paved corridor, and purposely arranged the *tablou*.

Both had an eye to the picturesque.

"Time to leave!" said the officer.

The old man was apparently overwhelmed with grief, and, after piously exhorting the prisoner to repentance and reflection upon his awful state, prepared to follow his conductor to the outer lodge.

"Take my arm!" said the turnkey, who began to grow impatient, and was fearful, perhaps, of another homily.

The proffered kindness was humbly and thankfully received, and rewarded by the agent, as he left the gate, by slipping a half-guinea into the hand of the gaoler.

"Humph!" said the man, as he turned the key ; "he is not such a bad un after all—only too much given to preaching!"

It would have been as good as fifty pounds to him, if he had overheard the sermon which the old countryman preached.

That same evening, when Meeran Hafaz sought Mr. Davids, at his office in Clement's Inn, he found the old man, as on the first visit, seated at a table, reading his memoranda, but this time he was alone.

"Now," said the young man, impatiently, "have you succeeded in seeing the prisoner?"

The agent nodded, to intimate that he had. He was a man of few words upon occasions.

"And the result?"

"Promises fairly," said the subtle, experienced rogue ; "the fellow, I find, neither lacks nerve nor presence of mind. I answer for his escape!"

The tone of perfect confidence in which this was uttered reassured his visitor.

"Within the time you promised?" he demanded.

"Within the time."

Satisfied with this assurance, the Indian next proceeded to inquire whether the agent, according to his orders, had succeeded in procuring for him the will of the late Sir William Mowbray. The respectable Mr. Davids, who had had it in his possession all the time, drew it from a drawer in the table, and placed it in his hands. Meeran read it hastily over : when he came to the part in which the deceased baronet gave his formal consent to the marriage of Ellen and Henry Ashton, and left her to the guardianship of the worthy rector of Carrow, a bitter smile curled his scornful lips. He was about to tear it into a thousand fragments, when the hand of the agent restrained him.

"Not till it is paid for!" quietly observed the man.

"Do you doubt me?" haughtily demanded Meeran.

"No—no ; but it is not business!" was the reply.

The young man cast upon the table the stipulated price, which the wretch eagerly seized, and began to count. Before he had finished, the parchment was thrust into the fire, where it crisped and curled, and finally was reduced to ashes.

"Are you satisfied?" he said, as the last guinea chinked as it fell from the hands of the agent.

"Perfectly!" he answered with a sigh ; for he could not avoid mentally calculating the riches of the man who so readily parted with such vast sums. Perhaps, also, he speculated upon his past and present designs.

After giving the man a further instalment of five hundred pounds, to enable him, as he stated, to carry out his schemes for the liberation of Will Sideler, Meeran took his leave. He longed to be free—to quit London, which began to be irksome to him, and hasten down to Carrow ; but pru-

dence whispered him that it was better to remain till the fate of the warrener was decided.

Strange that the destiny of two such beings should have been linked in the same chain ; but the headstrong indulgence of the passions makes us acquainted with odd confidants.

" For the expenses of releasing the prisoner ! " slowly repeated the old man, with a chuckle, as he placed the money in an iron chest, carefully concealed behind a panel in the wall of his office ; " as if I was fool enough to bribe, when wit will do as well ! I have no confidence in others, but I can trust to myself. Expenses ! " he iterated, with yet increased complacency ; " let me see : the four spring saws, twenty shillings ; turnkey, half-a-guinea—out of a thousand pounds on account ! No bad day's work ! I must employ some one the last night to assist me. I have not the strength, I fear, to throw the ball of twine over the prison walls : perhaps I could—perhaps I could ! "

Not being assured, however, that such was the case, he generously resolved to expend a guinea or two, in order to insure success—it was not much out of five thousand !

Having relieved his mind and conscience by this decision, he resumed the employment which the visit of Meeran Hafaz for a few moments had interrupted.

Let it not be considered that the portrait we have drawn of Mr. Davids is either dark or too highly coloured : there are many such men in London, ever ready for gain to assist in the most nefarious schemes, and accomplish the most unheard-of enterprises. We question if there are not several old residents of Clement's Inn still living who will recognize the original of the sketch, in the miserly old rascal who for so many years had his chambers at No. — court.

We are *certain* that the porter still remembers him.

CHAPTER XXV.

It is my home, but no familiar face
Is here to welcome me : desolation's breath,
Like the hot simoom, hath passed over it,
Marking its path by death.

HEIR OF THE SAVR.

At the end of the second day's journey, the carriage of Lady Mowbray, with Ellen and the female keepers, drove along the shady avenue of Carrow Park, and stopped in front of the mansion, which presented a lonely, deserted appearance. The shutters were all closed—no outward signs were visible of the place being inhabited.

The orphan sighed deeply, and hid her face in her hands, to conceal the tears which, despite her resolution, would flow, when she remembered the difference between her present and former reception. There was no kind Mrs. Jarmy to receive her—no Sir William to welcome her ; a chill fell upon her heart as she entered the

great hall. The poor girl felt as if she had crossed the threshold of her tomb.

The ayah, and two men-servants upon whom her ladyship could rely, were the only inmates of the place.

The bronzed cheek of Zara became of a yet deeper hue, as her eyes encountered the reproachful glances of her foster-child. They seemed to ask her if such was the recompence she merited for having preferred the life of her nurse to her own safety. Despite her apathy, the Indian woman was moved.

" She does not know me yet ! " she murmured.

Whether this proceeded from any sudden feeling of repentance, or resolution she had formed in favor of the being she had hitherto so cruelly persecuted, time will show.

The prisoner—for such the orphan again was in the hands of her persecutor—was conducted to the chamber, at the end of the picture-gallery, which she had formerly occupied. Well did she remember the first night she took possession of it—the affectionate kindness of her murdered uncle—the grateful attentions of the worthy old housekeeper : and the change to her present desolate state became doubly painful from the contrast.

" This is your chamber ! " observed her aunt, in a supercilious tone ; " you will not quit it, till you renounce your disgraceful attachment to this Henry, and yield to the wishes of your natural guardian ! "

" I shall quit it before the period which you so vainly hope for ! " was the calm reply.

" When ? " demanded the heartless woman.

" When I am taken forth to be laid in the same vault with him whose arm is now powerless to protect me ! " answered Ellen. " If the spirits of the dead are permitted to watch over those they love while living, I feel assured that my uncle is at this moment grieving over my injuries ! There is strength and consolation," she added, " in the conviction ! "

" Perhaps," said Lady Mowbray, " you may find yourself removed to a worse place, should you continue obstinately blind to your own good ! "

Her niece looked as if she felt that no place could be worse than her present prison—no guardian more hateful to her than her unfeeling relative.

" The mad-house ? " continued the speaker.

" I am not mad ! " exclaimed the orphan, mournfully ; " or if I am, the cruelties which you and my guardian have inflicted upon me have made me so ! Your persecutions may make the grave my only refuge ; but even you cannot deprive me of that—it is a sad, but sure one ! Aunt," she added, willing to make a last appeal to the womanly nature of her ladyship, " how have I wronged you, that you should bring the light of my young days to darkness so profound, no ray of hope can penetrate it ? You have a child—one whom doubtless you

love. What would you feel to see her thus oppressed and trampled on—tortured till reason is almost shaken from its throne? Mercy—mercy!'

" You know the price at which my affection will return to you!" said the cold, artful woman.

" And at that price," exclaimed Ellen, proudly, " I would scorn it! Weak and friendless as I am, I would not break the word I have given to the meanest of God's creatures—much less to the noble, generous being whom it is my pride to love! By what right," she continued, warming with indignation, " do you presume, madam, to exercise such an authority over me? You are neither of my blood nor kindred! My very soul revolts at such barefaced oppression!"

" Insolent!" said her ladyship.

" Insolent!" repeated her victim; " impossible! since language has no words sufficiently strong to characterize your baseness!"

" The authority of the chancellor!"

" He has been imposed upon!"

" The opinion of the physicians!"

" They have been bribed or deceived! the very means you have taken to obtain possession of my person—the precautions to secrete me here—prove that you are aware of the infamy of your purpose; but it will be baffled yet! The hand of heaven will rend the mask of seeming virtue from your treacherous visage, and expose you to the contempt and scorn of the world—a degraded thing, who meanly descended, for a hireling's pay, to pander to the passions of a villain!"

" Ellen!"

" A murderer!" added the almost frantic girl. " Yes, in the sight of heaven I accuse him of the murder of my uncle; and you, madam, in heart, if not in act, as his accomplice!"

The countenance of Lady Mowbray turned deadly pale, and her features absolutely became distorted with rage, to find herself thus brayed by one whom she regarded as a mere child. The evil passions of her vindictive nature were roused—her pride was enlisted in the contest; and she mentally vowed that no human power should prevent the accomplishment of Ellen's union with Meeran Hafaz; so bitterly at that moment did she feel towards the persecuted girl, that she absolutely raised her hand to strike her.

At the sight of the outrage offered to her foster-child, the hitherto impassible Zara interfered: her capricious disposition could lead her to plot against the happiness of her charge herself—even to destroy it—but it revolted against permitting violence from another.

" Back!" she exclaimed, calmly, but resolutely; " the child I nurtured at my bosom is not a slave! Do not fear, Ellen!" she added, in a voice slightly broken by emotion; " I am here to protect you: this degraded woman shall not harm you whilst I have life!"

" Degraded!" repeated her ladyship, with mortification and rage; " such words from the servant of Meeran Hafaz!"

" We are both his servants!" observed the ayah; " since he pays us both! My wages consist of kind words and looks—of the confidence he reposes in me, and the happiness I feel in serving him—me he respects! Your wages are the gold which his prodigal hand has heaped upon you—the gems which glitter on your withered neck! Trust me, our master knows the value of such service—he recompenses it, and despises you!"

" Turn that woman from the house!" exclaimed Lady Mowbray, transported beyond all self-command by the bitter taunts of the speaker.

The two female keepers advanced to execute the order they had received; but, although accustomed to have violent contests with their patients, and strong of limb and courage, they were like infants in the grasp of the resolute Zara, who dashed them from her as coolly and unconcerned as a tigress might be supposed at freeing herself from the attack of a couple of wolves.

" She is no woman!" observed one.

" Her grip is of iron!" added the other keeper, rubbing her shoulder, where the ayah had placed her hand.

" No matter," said their employer; " call up the footmen! Either this insolent creature quits the abbey, or I do!"

" You may do as you please!" answered Zara, with a glance of contempt; " I shall remain! Like most weak minds, anger hath made you mad! Suppose, for an instant, that you succeed in removing me from my foster-child, I should but have to go to the village, and declare that the wife of Colonel Mowbray held the niece of their late master a prisoner in the abbey—that she had sold her like a bale of merchandise to Meeran Hafaz: more than a hundred arms would be enlisted in her cause; they would drive you like a leper from the place, and rescue her! But why do I waste words?" she added, with a consciousness of one perfectly aware that her power was unassailable. " Till the future husband of Miss De Vere arrives, I am her guardian! Neither you, nor the female furies in your service, shall exercise the least control over her!"

With looks of disappointment and anger, Lady Mowbray and the keepers left the room. No sooner were they gone than Ellen approached the ayah.

" I cannot thank you," she said, " and yet I feel grateful for the protection you have afforded me! Oh, Zara, why not continue to pursue the path of penitence and virtue? Save me from Meeran and his destroying love! Save me, and the past shall be remembered only as a hideous dream! Save me, and I will bless you!"

The Indian woman seated herself, without a word, upon the pile of cushions which we have previously described as part of the furniture of the chamber.

" Will not pity—will not love for the

child you nurtured," continued the fair suppliant, "move you? Will not her returning affection compensate you for the town of Meeran—to say nothing of the approval of your own heart?"

"Leave me!" murmured Zara, hoarsely. "The Indian woman has given her word: she would die rather than break it!"

With a sigh of disappointment, and a look of pity and regret, such as an angel might have cast upon the nature it had failed to move, Ellen retired to the window, apparently to gaze upon the park, but in reality to hide her tears.

"God help me!" she mentally ejaculated; "my last hope is gone!"

The prisoner and her gaoler spoke no more that night. The stone was loosened—not removed.

At an early hour the following morning, the domestics assembled with terrified looks in the servants' hall. Each had a tale to tell of the extraordinary manner in which they had been disturbed during the night.

It seems that, alarmed by the heavy tread of a脚步 in the long, gloomy corridor into which their chambers opened, they had ventured to peep out, and beheld a wild, fantastic-looking person, whose head was crowned with a wreath of leaves and flowers, passing up and down the passage.

The footman—the same who had been so insolent to Joe Beans—declared that the ghost—for such he persisted in calling it—kept muttering something about blood; he distinctly heard the word.

The account of the two keepers was even more shocking: the mysterious visitant had obtained access to their bed-room—although they had, as they declared, doubly-locked the door—and made repeated signs to induce them to follow him; they even hinted at their intention of quitting the place—it was too much for their nerves.

Nerves! and yet, in the exercise of their heartless vocation, they had assisted and been instruments in scenes which might have made strong men weep.

"For my part, *Tummas*," observed the aristocratic footman, "although I have a very great respect for my lady—who knows how to *'preciate* a confidential servant—I shall start!"

His companion remained silent; perhaps he thought more of the promised reward.

At this moment the bell of Lady Mowbray's chamber rang violently. Her ladyship slept in the one lately occupied by the murdered baronet. There was a hesitation as to who should answer it.

"It is not my place," observed Thomas.

"Nor mine!" exclaimed his companion, conceitedly; "My lady should have brought her own woman with her! I am a young man, and the Colonel is remarkably jealous, it would not be prudent! These ladies," he added, "had better go!"

The signal was repeated yet more vehemently than before.

"Lord bless us!" said one of the female keepers; "perhaps the black lady is a strangling on her!"

"She is vicious enough!" chimed the other.

This suggestion, which was considered as more than probable, decided them.

All four of the speakers rushed in a body to the door of her ladyship's apartment—not one would go alone. Just as they reached the corridor, the bell rang again.

Barbara Botch, the elder of the two females, with a courage borrowed, most probably, from her morning draught, tapped at the door.

"Come in!" exclaimed a voice.

"I can't, my lady," replied the woman, shaking the lock: "the night-bolt is drawn!"

A noise was heard like the drawing of a bolt, and the two keepers entered the room. They found Lady Mowbray in a state of great excitement, sitting up in her bed, her features ghastly pale, and her eyes glancing wildly round the room.

"Search the room!" said their employer, faintly; "there is some one concealed in it!"

The women did as they were directed—not a closet was left unexplored: no one was to be seen. They looked at each other in silence. The windows were fastened, and to all appearance there was no other entrance than the one by which they came in.

"There is no one here," observed Barbara Botch.

"Has your ladyship seen him?"

"Seen who?"

"An old man, who looks as if he had just risen from the grave—his features are so pale and death-like—with flowers and leaves about his head. He has nearly frightened the servants out of their wits! I am sure the house is haunted!"

"Haunted!" repeated the lady; "ridiculous! Some such person as you have described certainly did gain admittance to my room, and stood moaning at the foot of my bed—even had the insolence to touch the clothes, as if to awaken me, and motion me to follow him; but I am certain the fellow was human!"

The two keepers shook their heads incredulously.

"How could he get in, my lady?" demanded Barbara.

"Or out?" added her companion. "The night-bolt was drawn when we knocked, and the windows are fastened still!"

This was exactly what Lady Mowbray wished to know, and was determined, if possible, to discover. Hastily throwing on a loose wrapper, she sprang from the bed, and searched every part of the room. Not content with examining the closets, she sounded the walls, by tapping against them. To all appearance they were solid.

"This is inexplicable!" she murmured, with an air of vexation.

The women looked as if they considered it awful.

"I shall change my room!" added her ladyship, after a few moments' reflection.

Her hearers thought that it would be of

little use ; they related, in turn, how they had been terrified during the night by a similar apparition, and concluded by expressing a desire to leave the abbey.

It required all the reasoning of their employer, backed by promises of increased recompense, to induce them to remain.

Under pretence of assisting her to dress, Lady Mowbray—upon whom the adventure had made a deeper impression than she chose to admit—kept them in the room till she was ready to descend. Secretly she prayed for the arrival of her husband and Meeran Hafaz—for another such a night, she felt assured, would leave her alone in the mansion with the ayah—whom she already doubted—and Ellen.

By her directions, the doors were kept carefully locked. Not a window was permitted to be opened—that if any of the inhabitants of the village chanced to pass through the park, they might not perceive the house was inhabited. The precaution was an unnecessary one—for, since the murder of the lamented Sir William, few cared to approach the place.

Ellen, who had been prevented from sleeping by the sad complexion of her thoughts, had been equally favored by a visitation. The same figure had appeared at the foot of her bed, moaned, and invited her to follow him. At first she deemed that her imagination was playing her one of those fantastic tricks with which it sometimes bewilders waking reason : it was not till the phantom, or whatever it was, had disappeared, that she fancied she could trace in it a resemblance to old Martin. Bitterly did she then reproach herself that she had not obeyed its mute invitation—it might have led her to liberty.

To her astonishment, the ayah—whose sleep was generally so light that a breath would break it—had not once stirred : a spell seemed to be upon her.

By the light of the moon, which partially illuminated the old panelled chamber, the orphan noticed something glittering upon the ground, at the foot of the pile of cushions upon which her faithless nurse was reposing. She recognized the long, keen knife which Zara, like most of her countrywomen, invariably wore : to steal from her bed and secure it, was the thought and act of an instant.

No sooner was the orphan in possession of the weapon, than a fearful calm—a repose like that of death—fell upon her spirits. She felt that she was mistress of herself and destiny. It seemed as if it were no longer in the power of her enemies to make her false to her plighted faith ; even the idea of Meeran Hafaz became less terrible.

Carefully enfolding the instrument in her handkerchief, she placed it next her heart—resolved that it should become its sheath, rather than another head than Henry Ashton's should e'er be pillow'd near it.

A sad change had come over the inhabitants of the Home Farm. Matthew Ashton still drove his team and sowed his

fields. The world went prosperously with him, but his heart was heavy—he missed our absent hero. It seemed as if he had no longer an object to toil for. As for his dame, she was even more changed than her husband. Her temper had become sour, fretful, and peevish. Her dairy, once a model for the wives of the neighboring farmers, was neglected, her butter no longer quoted as the best in the market.

"What's the use of working," she used to observe, "when we are so near the grave? Harry's footsteps," she added, "will never follow us to it!"

This speech was generally addressed to her husband, on which occasion the old man would only smoke the faster.

On the morning after the scene of confusion we have described had taken place at Carrow Abbey, the aged couple were seated in the little parlor, at breakfast, when one of the servants entered, to inform his master that the sexton of the parish wished to see him.

"The sexton?" exclaimed the dame, sharply; "And what can he want with farmer? There be no one dead here! send him away!"

Her husband thought differently, and directed the eccentric old fellow to be admitted. His curiosity was roused : there was something strange in Chettleborough calling upon any one. In fact, it was a rare thing to encounter him out of the precincts of the churchyard : he did not seem at home anywhere else. He was much better acquainted with the gravestones than his living neighbors, and probably liked them better.

As the tall, gaunt figure of the earth-deliver stalked into the room, Mrs. Ashton thought she had never seen a more ill-favored visitor.

"I have come to you, farmer," he said, "because I don't feel quite easy in my mind!"

"Hadn't you better go to the doctor?" replied the dame.

"That is not what he means," observed her husband, who understood the speaker's manner better than his wife. "Something has occurred to unsettle him."

"He looks as ugly," thought the old woman, "as if he had seen a ghost : not but what he ought to be used to them by this time!"

Our readers will recollect that he lived in a corner of the churchyard.

"What has occurred, Master Sexton?" demanded the farmer ; something respecting poor old Martin?"

His visitor nodded in the affirmative.

"Speak out, man!"

"Can't?"

"Why?"

Chettleborough most ungallantly pointed to the lady.

"Never speak before women!" he said.

Our female readers, we feel certain, will admit that this was more than sufficient to try the patience and temper of the most amiable of their sex : not that Mrs. Ashton

was precisely the woman most entitled to that appellation—for she muttered something in which the word “bear” was distinctly audible.

The farmer took his hat, and invited his visitor to follow him to the little garden in front of the house. As soon as they were standing under the mulberry-tree, beneath which was a well-filled row of bee-hives, Chettleborough stopped.

“Sir William be dead,” he said; “Parson is away—Master Harry and Joe Beans gone, the Lord knows where: so I come to you as the next sensible person in the parish, to tell you that there be strangers in the abbey!”

“Pooh, pooh!” exclaimed Matthew Ashton.

“Old Martin has seen them!”

“How should he get in?”

“He knows more ways than any living thing to enter the house,” replied the sexton. “I have several times missed him, but I made my mind easy, for I knew where he was. He returned this morning, after a longer absence than usual, and has been raving ever since about Miss Ellen and a black woman: rely upon it, farmer, I am right—there be some unlawful doings at the hall!”

“It shall be seen to,” said the uncle of our hero, after a moment’s reflection. “If Miss Ellen be at the hall, villainy is at work—it shall be seen to!”

CHAPTER XXVI.

A habitation fragile and unsure
Hath he that buildeth on the vulgar mind.

THE warrener devoted the greater portion of the night which followed the visit of the wily agent of Meean Hafaz to sawing through a portion of the massive lock of his cell. The bar shot into the solid granite, and consequently could only be tampered with when fastened. The sharp-biting edge of the spring-saws slowly but surely cut through the well-tempered bar. Daylight dawned as he had about half finished his operation.

Although there was slight chance of detection—for the bolt once drawn back, no indications of the attempt could be perceived—the prisoner thought it most prudent to remain, under pretence of indisposition, all day in his cell, so as not to give a chance away.

“One night more,” he muttered, as, tired with his efforts, he threw himself upon his narrow pallet, “and I shall be free! I have often, in my youth,” he added, “dreamed of other lands, but never thought to lay my bones in them! No matter—with gold I can live as merrily in India as in England!”

The door of the corridor in which the cell of the speaker was situated opened into the day-yard; it was regularly locked every night after the turnkeys had taken their round: this, however, did not present any serious difficulty to the plan of his escape; for directly over it was a grated aperture, for the double purpose of ventilation and

light, quite large enough to admit of a much stouter man than himself passing through—that is, provided the iron bars were removed. Sideler calculated that he could saw them in about two hours.

Although considerably fatigued, the ruffian was too much excited to sleep, but lay upon his back, mentally measuring the chances and difficulties of his position. Suddenly he recollects a danger which he had not previously calculated: the door of his dungeon grated heavily upon its hinges every time it was either opened or shut, and his fellow-prisoners would be certain to hear him, even if he succeeded in cutting through the lock, and might raise sufficient outcry to cause an alarm.

“I must have oil,” he thought, “to ease them.” The difficulty was, how to procure it.

A copious breakfast, which remained untouched, was placed upon the little deal table close to the window of the cell. The warrener sat near it, with his arms folded, lost in profound meditation; his usually voracious appetite had deserted him—thickcoming fancies crowded upon his mind; the attempt to escape might fail, in which case, what remained? a trial, the press-room, and the scaffold! The mob, with their eager, curious faces turned towards him—their yells, perchance—the grip of the hangman—the death-struggle—and after death!—he shuddered as he thought of that.

So painful had his reveries become, that he felt considerably relieved when old Mike, with his stealthy, catlike step, came gliding into the dungeon. Any society was preferable to his own reflections. The old man cast a greedy look upon the table.

“Perhaps I intrude,” he said.

“Not in the least,” replied the prisoner, forcing a smile; “on the contrary, the sight of a human face is welcome.”

Mike gave one of those peculiar smiles: perhaps he thought to how few the sight of his face was welcome.

“One of the keepers told me,” he continued, “that you were ill, so I thought I would drop in in a friendly way.”

“Ill!” repeated Sideler, passing his hand over his blood-shot eyes; “I should think I am ill—and enough to make me! The air of this accursed place is thick and heavy—I can’t breathe here! I feel the slow throbbing of my pulse—can almost hear the beating of my heart! I pine for the free air and green fields—they never appeared such luxuries as since I have been deprived of them!”

The old man nodded his head, as if to intimate that he perfectly comprehended the feeling.

“Besides,” continued the speaker, “when I try to eat, I have a choking sensation in my throat!”

“That’s because you eat alone,” observed Mike, from time to time casting a hungry look towards the breakfast-table. “When I first came here I felt as you do—cared little or nothing for food; but I soon got

over it ; my appetite returned, and now I am so used to the place that I should regret to change it for the green fields you talk of : the sight of trees and flowers always sets me thinking."

The warrener took the hint, and invited the speaker to share his meal with him.

Mike needed no second invitation, but, seating himself at table, commenced an attack upon the food with the earnestness of a man sharp set, and conscientiously bent on doing justice to the good things before him. Chop after chop disappeared, to the envy and admiration of Will Sideler.

"It strikes me, my friend," he observed to his visitor, who threw himself back in his chair, with a sigh of repletion, after making a meal which a ploughman might have been proud of, "that you do not often come across a good breakfast?"

"Seldom, except upon hanging mornings!" was the reply; "and that is generally once a week!"

"Hanging mornings!" repeated the prisoner—a very unpleasant suspicion crossing his mind. "Why on that morning more than any other?"

"I'll tell you!" said the old man, in a confidential tone.

He moved his chair, in a friendly way, nearer to the warrener, who drew back the stool upon which he was seated, with an involuntary shudder.

"You know that I am generally present on such occasions?"

"I have heard so!" dryly answered the prisoner.

"Well, then," continued the narrator, "as soon as the chaplain has given the signal, and the executioner has drawn the bolt, the sheriffs and their friends hurry off to the governor's room to breakfast. Such a scramble and such a spread—fowls, tongue, beef! Talk of my appetite—you should see them! To be sure they are obliged to be up early, in order to get through the mob to the prison, and that I suppose gives them an extra whet! Enough, however, remains for the turnkeys and—you know who I mean?"

"No, I don't!"

"The hangman!" added Mike. "They are a good-natured set of fellows, and generally invite me to pick a bit with them!"

"What!" exclaimed Sideler, with disgust; "do they sit at the same table with such a wretch?"

Mike regarded him very much like a man whose feelings were deeply wounded. Perhaps he was a friend of the much-abused functionary of whom they had been speaking; or his long residence in Newgate had upset his previously-conceived ideas.

"And why not?" he said. "I can assure you that he is considered a very respectable person!"

"I never saw one," observed the prisoner, with a sickly look; for, like most rustics, he had a most unphilosophical idea of the dignity of the office in question.

"That may account for your prejudice," said the old man, with a forgiving smile—which had, however, something sinister in it.

"What is his name?" demanded the prisoner.

"Mat Cowlis."

"And his age?"
His visitor seemed to reflect for a few moments before answering.

"I can't exactly say," he replied. "It's rather difficult to guess his age; but I should think he is not much under fifty!"

Sideler noticed with satisfaction that the speaker was nearer seventy.

"He is a thin, wiry man," continued Mike, "with black hair and very bushy whiskers, and when dressed in his best suit of black and a white neckerchief, looks almost as well as the parson. In fact, when Potts, the city grocer, was sheriff, he took him for one, and chatted with him very pleasantly until he found out his mistake—which I don't think he ever forgave."

"I should think not!" observed his listener.

"Did you ever hear how Mat came to be made hangman?" inquired Mike.

"Never!"

"Well, then, I'll tell you," resumed the visitor; "for somehow I begin to feel quite a liking for you!"

The prisoner—whose suspicions of the speaker, whatever their nature, were entirely removed—extended his hand, which Mike shook most cordially.

"Thank you!" said the warrener. "I hope we shall become better acquainted!"

"Not unlikely!" replied Mike; and the warrener again noticed that peculiar smile which had previously annoyed him.

"Some twenty years ago, more or less," resumed the narrator—"for I can't be particular as to dates—Mat Cowlis was a cooper in the London Docks. He was a happy fellow then, and had everything comfortable and respectable about him: a neat little cottage at Rotherhithe, and a wife whom the world called pretty—perhaps she was. Mat believed her to be good, and loved her for that better even than her beauty. Wasn't he a fool," added the speaker, with fearful earnestness, "to suppose a woman could feel grateful for an affection which displayed itself in rising early and working late to keep their home in comfort about them? Had he flattered her vanity with soft words and fine speeches, she might have liked him better!"

"It's the way with them!" observed the warrener—many passages in whose early life led him to sympathize with the story. "I suppose I can guess the rest?"

"Doubtless," said Mike; "the tale is as old as the world, or pretty nearly so. She deceived her husband for a young fellow whom he had assisted out of charity, when dismissed from his place in the docks; but with all your cunning," added the old man, "I question if you can guess Mat's revenge!"

"Perhaps he murdered her?"

"No he didn't!"

"Left her, then?"

"Neither one nor the other—though his blood was changed to gall, and his heart to ashes: he dissembled, gradually yielded to the persuasion of his dear friend, and accompanied him to the alehouse; from a sober and industrious man, became a drunken and a lazy one—lazy in appearance only—for his brain worked night and day."

"And enough to make it!"

"Well, sir, at the end of three months, Mat lost his situation, too, and then the punishment of the false wife commenced. One by one he stripped the cottage of every piece of furniture, till not a bed remained for them to lie upon—even the shawl he had given her upon her wedding-day, went to the pawn-shop. She dared not reproach him, she felt that she had no right to do so. One day when there was not a loaf of bread in the house, or anything left which she could sell to procure one, intelligence was brought her that Mat Cowls and Dick Houghton—that was the name, if I recollect rightly, of her seducer—had been taken up for housebreaking—caught in the very act."

"That was unfortunate!" observed Will Sideler, who began to take considerable interest in the history of the hangman: not so much, perhaps, from the circumstances themselves, as the singular earnestness with which his visitor related it.

"No it wasn't!" said Mike.

"Of course, I mean for the husband!"

"It was the very thing he wished—had been trying and scheming for; the person who gave information to the Bow-street officer was no other than Mat himself; he also restored the property taken, and, in consideration of his penitence, as they called it, was permitted to turn king's evidence."

"And his accomplice?"

"Was hanged!" exclaimed the old man, with a deep chuckle. "Mat hung him with his own hands—for the situation happened to be vacant at the time, and he asked for and obtained it. What passed when the cap was drawn over Dick Houghton's eyes, and the rope over his neck, none know. The sheriffs supposed he was asking pardon of his friend for the duty he had undertaken—but I guess they were deceived!"

"More likely," said the warrener, "he was reproaching him for his ingratitude, and telling him how he had been revenged."

Mike nodded his head, to intimate that he thought it not unlikely.

"And what became of Mat's wife?" inquired the speaker.

"Oh, he hung her, too!"

"What, his own wife?" ejaculated Sideler—for even to his callous nature such a revenge seemed going a little too far.

"And why not?" demanded his visitor, in a calm tone of voice. "It was his duty, as executioner, to do so: he remembered his, if she had forgotten hers!"

A low, indistinct sort of murmuring indicated that his new friend could not quite agree with him.

"At first," resumed Mike, "she lived—at least I have heard so—with a city banker, whose notions of respectability were shocked when he heard that she was the wife of the hangman; so he turned her off. The same thing occurred more than once; for, wherever she went, Mat took care to let the fact be pretty generally known. At last she became connected with a gang of forgers, who employed her to pass the notes. It was chiefly brought home to her by her husband's means—she was condemned! How the once fond fool she had deceived laughed, when he saw the judge place the black cap over his beetle brows, and heard him sentence her to the gallows!"

"He must have been a devil!" exclaimed Will Sideler, emphatically.

"He was what a bad wife and false friend made him," answered Mike. "The rest of poor Mat Cowls's story is soon told," he added; "the tie between him and the woman was not generally known; and those who were aware of the fact pretended not to know it—it might have inconvenienced them; for there was no one else to fill his office: people will get more enlightened by-and-by."

"But did he really hang her?"

"You shall hear: on the morning of the execution, the instant her husband entered the press-room to pinion her, she began violently to reproach him for her ruin, as she was pleased to call it. One word silenced her—the name of Dick Houghton. No sooner did Mat whisper that in her ear, as he drew back her arms to pass the cords, than she comprehended it all—his drunkenness, dissipation, loss of character and place, the robbery—everything. What is very odd," added Mike, musingly, "from that moment she neither resisted, spoke, nor seemed conscious of what was going on, till the drop fell."

There was a pause: the warrener felt as if he had listened to the narration of some terrible dream—he could almost have imagined himself under the influence of the nightmare; his visitor, on the contrary, appeared as calm as usual. The only indication of the excitement which he had betrayed at the commencement of the story was the rapidity with which he drew the smoke from the pipe which he had just lighted: his coolness might be accounted for by the supposition that he had both heard the tale and related it many times before.

"And how did you know all this?" inquired Sideler.

"Mat told me."

"He must have great confidence in you."

"Very great," observed the old man; "we are friends—he tells me everything."

"Then I must tell you, Master Mike," said the ruffian, with an affectation of disgust, "that your acquaintance with such a fellow does you very little credit!"

A deep scowl appeared upon the features of his visitor.

" You had better not let Mat hear you say so," was his reply.

" And why not?"

" Nothing—that is, nothing particular! only he might remember it in the event of your becoming better acquainted with him! In hanging," he added, with the most provoking coolness, " a great deal depends upon the knot—the manner in which it is tied. In Dick Houghton's case, the struggles lasted more than ten minutes; but then the executioner was a novice at his trade, and felt a little nervous."

The warrener felt a sudden chill creep through his veins, and regretted, he scarcely knew why, his imprudent speech: as his visitor rose to leave the cell, he felt almost tempted to request that he would not repeat it.

He had not been long alone before one of the turnkeys made his appearance, accompanied by the agent of Meeran Hafaz. Sideler eagerly welcomed his pretended parent, and the impious farce of prayer was repeated, with the same success as on the preceding day.

" How have you succeeded?" demanded Mr. Davids in a whisper.

" Excellently? the lock is half cut through!"

" It must be entirely cut through to-morrow night," said the seeming countryman, " for I have promised your friend that by that time you shall be free."

" I shall require oil," observed the prisoner.

The thoughtful agent placed a phial, containing about four ounces, in his hand.

" Read the paper round it," he whispered, as the warrener thrust it into his bosom; " it contains every instruction: you must follow them to the letter; and, remember, no impatience must induce you to quit your cell before the governor has made his rounds, which he regularly does at eleven."

" I understand."

" How long do you think it will require to cut through the bars in the window over the door of the corridor?"

" An hour, at least," was the reply.

After a few moments' reflection, the respectable Mr. Davids informed him that would do; and it was finally arranged that, the instant the clock of the neighboring church struck one, a ball of twine should be thrown, by his friends on the outside of the prison, into the day-yard—by which contrivance the prisoner was to pull a knotted rope over the wall: that once done, the rest of his task would be easy enough.

As the seemingly heart-broken old man, after taking an affectionate leave of his pretended son, crossed the day-yard of the prison, in company with the turnkey, who was to accompany him to the lodge, they encountered Mike, whose countenance still bore traces of the spiteful feelings which the observations of Will Sideler had left rankling in his breast.

" The fool will hang—I am sure he will!" he kept muttering to himself; " the mark of the gallows is upon him!"

No sooner did he perceive the clever agent of Meeran Hafaz, than his eyes began to sparkle with peculiar intelligence. With the craftiness which marked his character, he took care, however, to make no inquiry, till the object of his curiosity had left Newgate.

That same evening, whilst smoking in the porter's lodge, he inquired of the same officer " who the old man was whom he had conducted out of the place that morning."

" The father of a prisoner," replied the turnkey in a careless tone, as if he presumed that the answer was a matter of perfect indifference.

" Of Sideler?" said Mike.

The man nodded.

" Has he been often to see him?"

" Twice—yesterday and to-day."

" Of course you remained all the while in the cell, according to the prison regulations?"

" Of course I did :" replied the man, thrusting his tongue into his cheek.

The old fellow knew that he was lying, but did not choose to say so.

" You should hear him preach!" added the man.

" Did you hear him?"

" How else should I have known it!"

This was enough—Mike inquired no further. He had recognized Davids, despite his disguise; for they had had more than one profitable transaction together. His relationship to the warrener he knew to be a pretence—nor was he at a loss to guess the purport of his visit.

" No—no!" he muttered to himself; " I said the fool would hang, and I am determined that he shall! No escape! but I must watch—it is fortunate that I can do so! Escape—indeed—I'll teach him what it is to insult me!"

Perhaps there was another consideration—it would have robbed his friend the hangman, Mat Cowlis, of ten guineas; and he felt a strong interest in the worldly prosperity of that very amiable individual, and law officer of the crown.

That same night the warrener was busy, as before, at the lock of his cell.

CHAPTER XXVII.

*Revenge, the luxury of vulgar minds,
As generous pardon, and soft, pitying words
Distinguish nobler natures.* OLD PLAY.

The Governor of Newgate had made his usual round, and everything was still within the prison, when, Will Sideler, who had succeeded in cutting through the lock of the cell, with shoeless feet crept stealthily along the corridor, the door of which was strongly barred against him; a difficulty, as our readers are aware, which had been foreseen and provided against by the clever Mr. Davids.

After several ineffectual attempts, the ruffian contrived at last to raise himself to a level with the grated aperture, through which was the only mode of escape into the day-yard.

Fortunately for him, the bars were already corroded by rust and time, and required but little time to cut through, for the effort was most fatiguing: seeing that he was obliged partially to support himself by one hand, whilst he plied the saws with the other.

On the other side of the door was the figure of a man, with his ear glued to the iron-studded panel, listening eagerly for the sound. As the sharp teeth of the spring, saw began to bite into the iron above, it made a kind of low, hissing sound, which the listener occasionally answered by a corresponding chuckle.

We scarcely need say that it was no other than Mike, like a bloodhound upon the watch.

"Saw away!" he muttered; "saw your heart out—you cannot escape me! It will be delightful," he added, with a ferocious kind of joy, "to look into his eyes, when he knows who I really am! but I'll not balk him yet—it must be at the very moment of escape, when his pulse beats high with hope—then will be my time!"

There was a fiend-like refinement in the reasoning of the old man—the very solitude of whose existence had given a rough sort of philosophical and half poetical tone to his mind.

First drawing a pistol from his breast, to see that the priming was all right, Mike crept with noiseless step from his hiding-place by the door of the corridor, across the courtyard, and took his station in an angle formed by the wall of the day-room and that of the prison. The moon was shining so brightly, that a rat could not have run over the flagstones without his perceiving it; whilst the deep shadow of the spot where he was standing effectually screened him from observation.

As he crouched down in the corner, like a tiger waiting for his spring, the clock of the neighboring church struck a quarter to one.

A few minutes later, and the burly figure of the warrener was seen crossing the yard towards the wall. He had his shoes suspended round his neck by a twisted handkerchief, having prudently removed them to break the noise of his fall from the window, as well as to avoid alarming his fellow-prisoners by his foot-fall along the corridor.

"I wonder," muttered Mike, "how he intends to scale the wall! Does the fool think he can fly over? What is he doing now—praying? Rather too soon for that!"

The ruffian was upon his knees, fastening on his shoes. Hence the mistake of the concealed witness of his proceedings.

The old man had not long to wait—for just as the warrener rose from his knees, the clock struck one. The last vibration had scarcely died away, before a leaden weight, enveloped in a soft wrapper, to deaden the sound of its fall, was thrown over the wall. A strong thread of twine was attached to it.

The spy grinned. He saw at once that his suspicions were correct—the prisoner had accomplices.

Sideler hastily began to pull the twine, and soon succeeded in dragging over the wall a strong rope, knotted at regular distances, so as to afford a hold for the hands and feet.

After pulling it several times to ascertain that it was well secured on the opposite side, the prisoner began to ascend. He had just raised himself from the ground, when a cold, clammy hand grasped his neck, and a voice, something between a chuckle and a whisper, bade him descend.

The next instant Sideler was on his feet, with Mike, who still retained his hold upon his neck, presenting a pistol to his head.

"Mike?" faltered the warrener, "is it you?"

"Well, I guess it is!" replied the man, mockingly.

"You surely don't mean to detain me?"

"Don't I?" said his captor.

"But I thought we were friends?"

"And so we are—such dear friends that I can't think of parting with you!" answered Mike, with a grin. "To speak plainly with you, I must say your proceeding is most unhandsome towards me!"

"Unhandsome?"

"Yes—robbing me!"

"Robbing you?" repeated the warrener, more and more mystified; "I don't understand what you mean!"

"You soon will!" observed the old man.

"How can my escape rob you?" demanded Will.

"Of just ten guineas—to say nothing of the value of your clothes, which are dirt cheap at two pounds more: which makes just twelve pounds ten shillings!"

A cold perspiration broke over the haggard features of the prisoner—for a horrible suspicion had struck him.

"You are," he exclaimed, in a tone in which terror and disgust were mingled—"the—"

He could not pronounce the name. His throat became suddenly parched, and his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth.

"Exactly" said Mike, "the hangman, Mat—you know me at last! Of course," he added, "you would not wish to deprive a poor fellow like myself of his perquisites! You would never be so unreasonable!"

As the speaker made this last observation, he peered into the eyes of his victim, who remained helpless as a child in his hand. The old man chuckled with delight, as he felt the muscular, iron frame of the strong man tremble beneath the grasp of his long, bony fingers, which half encircled his neck.

At this moment the rope was agitated from the opposite side by the agent and his assistants—they were growing impatient.

"I will give you the ten guineas!" said the warrener, with a desperate effort to recover his self-possession.

" You forget the clothes!" quietly observed Mike.

" Twelve then?"

" But the risk!"

" Fifty!" added the prisoner, with increased terror.

" To say nothing of the pleasure of turning off a fine-built fellow like yourself!" whispered the hangman.

" What say you to a hundred?"

" It is not enough!"

" All I possess?" urged Sideler.

" Will not tempt me?" replied Mike, in a determined tone; although it was not without a severe struggle with his avarice that he came to such a resolution. " It is not often that I make up my mind to a luxury—but when I do, money does not stand in my way! You remember our conversation yesterday, when, like a fool, I told you my story—you scorned me: it's ill quarrelling with Mat—he will not forget it when he ties the knot! If you stir or offer the least resistance," he added—for the warrener was beginning to draw courage from desperation—"the bullet whistles through your brain!"

" Better that," muttered the prisoner, " than the rope!"

With a sudden blow, he dashed the pistol from the hands of his captor: as it fell upon the ground the pan flew open and the priming fell out, fortunately without exploding. Once disarmed, the tables were turned—Mike was like an infant at the mercy of one as pitiless as himself.

" Help!—help!" he cried; " pri—"

The word was cut short by a blow upon the temple from the fist of Will Sideler, which felled the hangman like an ox in the shambles. To seize him by the throat, and drag him into the obscure corner of the courtyard, was the work of an instant.

Again the rope was jerked more violently than before; but, although a minute's delay might compromise his safety, and his friends on the outside of the prison were evidently growing impatient, the warrener did not leave the old man till he had kicked him about the head and body so as to fearfully disfigure him. Bitterly did he regret that he had not his knife: never had he experienced, in the course of the long indulgence of his passions, such ferocious joy—it rendered him insensible even to his danger.

But then it must be remembered that his victim was the hangman—the fellow who had threatened him with the rope—coolly calculated the price of blood—a wretch whose fearful gripe he had already felt upon his neck.

" I may swing!" he muttered; but Mat Cowls will never tie the knot he boasted of!"

Giving the senseless man a farewell kick, the ruffian grasped the rope, and with the activity of a much younger man, soon drew himself to the top of the wall: once there, the descent was easy. He glided down, and stood once more at liberty.

The agent and two of his confidential as-

sistants, who were well armed, were waiting to receive him.

" What the deuce delayed you?" demanded the respectable Mr. Davids; " you appear to have been as loth to quit your prison as others are to enter it?"

" I have been watched!" replied the warrener.

" By whom?"

" The hangman! and had a struggle for life with him. I would have bribed the aged wretch, but he refused my gold! He longed for the pleasure of tying me to the gibbet, and so —"

" You murdered him?"

" Even so!"

" And very proper, too!" replied the philosophic agent; " are you sure that he is dead?"

" Unless he has more lives than a cat?" was the reply.

The agent felt that there was no time to be lost: it was just possible that the speaker was deceived—that the hangman might recover, and give an alarm. Hastily removing the cloak from his own shoulders, he threw it over those of the liberated felon, and placed a fur travelling cap upon his rough, shaggy head.

" Follow me," he said, " without a word!"

The whole party pursued their way as rapidly as possible towards Blackfriars Bridge, where a travelling carriage with four horses was waiting, ready to start at an instant's notice.

The warrener entered first, and Mr. Davids followed him; the two persons who had accompanied them remained behind.

" Dover?" said the agent.

The postilions cracked their whips, and the carriage started at a rate which threatened—in the event of their being followed—to leave pursuit behind. At every stage fresh horses had been ordered—every difficulty foreseen and provided against: so that they reached the sea-port without interruption.

At the Ship Hotel, they found the valet of Meean Hafaz waiting for them: he had been directed by his master to accompany the warrener to Marseilles, and see the fugitive safely embarked on board the vessel which was to convey him to India.

As the post-office packet sailed out of the harbour at Dover, the agent—who was standing upon the pier, impatiently counting the moments of departure—rubbed his hands with an air of pious satisfaction: he had very cleverly earned the large sum of five thousand pounds, and saved the life of a fellow-creature.

We need not inform our readers which reflection afforded him the most pleasure.

Great was the consternation amongst the officials in Newgate, when, at an early hour the following morning, the flight of the prisoner was discovered. The turnkeys underwent a strict examination before the governor—but nothing could be elicited to afford the least light upon the subject. Mike—or, as we must now call him, Mat Cowls, the hangman—was removed to the infirmary

ry ; for, although fearfully disfigured, he still lived.

"I can do nothing for him!" observed the surgeon, as he contemplated the swollen and distorted features of the old man ; "he is past cure!"

"No—no!" murmured the patient with a deep groan ; "I shall live! I will live to hang the rascal yet! Try, doctor—try!"

The man of science did so : and Mat Cowls kept his word. He did live—but whether to accomplish the revenge he had promised himself, the future only can decide.

Despite the indifference which Meeran Hafaz had assumed, at his interview with Will Sideler, he was not insensible to the danger which might accrue to himself, should the scheme of his agent fail—for he felt assured the ruffian would put his threat into execution, and denounce him to the hands of offended justice. Although he appeared in society with the usual smile upon his lips, and a light spirit, the canker was secretly gnawing at his heart. He had given orders to his domestics to be called at any hour a person of the name of Davids should inquire for him : it was not till an early hour on the morning of the fourth day, that the indefatigable old man drove up to the door of the splendid mansion in St. James's Square.

"You have returned at last?" said his employer, who had been watching all night in the library.

"As fast as four horses could bring me!" answered the man ; "it has cost a mint of money!"

"Never mind the amount!" hastily ejaculated his employer—who regarded gold only as the means of contributing to his pleasure or passions ; "we will not dispute on that point!"

The agent could not suppress a sigh of envy, as he looked round the splendidly furnished apartment, and mentally calculated the wealth of the speaker.

"The result?" impatiently demanded Meeran, to whom every moment of suspense was agony rendered more intense by the long hours of doubt he had endured ; "has the ruffian escaped?"

"He has!" was the reply.

"And embarked?"

"I did not quit the pier till I saw the packet out of harbor."

The eyes of the young Indian flashed brightly for an instant, with intense satisfaction. The weight was removed from his heart.

The account between himself and his visitor was so liberally settled, that even the avaricious Mr. Davids for once was compelled to own himself satisfied ; and he quitted the house, to return to his den in Clement's Inn, much richer man than he left it.

"A few more such clients," he thought, as, overcome with fatigue, he threw himself upon his truckle-bed, "and my fortune would be made!"

With this reflection he fell asleep. His

dreams were of gold—the only god he worshipped, or had ever believed in.

Greatly as Meeran Hafaz rejoiced at the escape of the warrener, one doubt of the future still lingered on his mind : frequently he tried to dismiss it, but it would return to him. For more than ten days he had received no letters from Martingale, and he kept continually asking himself whether the attempt upon the life of Henry Ashton had failed ; the interest, too, which the Khan appeared to take in Ellen alarmed him—for he knew him, by experience, to be both resolute and indefatigable in the pursuit of any purpose upon which he had once set his mind. With respect to any suspicion which he might entertain touching the death of Sir William Mowbray, he felt perfectly at rest. The oath of his quondam friend assured him that he would never, *by word or writing*, denounce him.

"Let him return!" he said, alluding to his rival ; long before he can reach England, Ellen shall be mine, and seas be placed between us!"

He was mistaken : the avenger was closer upon his steps than he imagined.

"Better he should live," he added, soliloquizing, "to endure the misery of knowing she is another's—to feel the serpent fangs of jealousy gnawing his very heart-strings—its fires consuming him! The death of an unsuccessful rival like Henry Ashton would be mercy—not revenge!"

That same day Meeran Hafaz started, with Colonel Mowbray, for Carrow Abbey.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

In vain he flies—the furies still pursue.
Avenging justice on the murderer's track
Follows to claim her due.

SIEGE OF COLCHESTER.

THE *chancellerie* of the British embassy was crowded with Englishmen anxious to obtain the *visé* of his excellency to their passports—the regulations regarding which were far more stringent than at present. Amongst the number of visitants was a tall, pale young man, whose countenance was marked by sorrow and recent fatigue. Still there was a cold determination in his eye, which showed that his energies were not yet subdued. He was dressed in deep mourning. It was Henry Ashton, who, after travelling day and night, had reached the capital of our Gallic neighbors. As his passport was a diplomatic one, the formality of calling again was dispensed with : the necessary signature was affixed at once.

Several gentlemen who had been waiting, murmured at the preference—which, with their English notions, they could not understand.

"I have called twice!" observed one.

"And I also!" added another. "My business is most important."

"Life and death wait upon mine!" exclaimed a third speaker, who was no other than the worthy rector of Carrow.

At the sound of his well-remembered voice, his former pupil turned hastily round—for he had been standing with his back to him, replying to the *attaché*, who had promised to offer his apologies to the ambassador for omitting the usual visit which etiquette required. They recognized each other in an instant.

"Henry!"

"My benefactor!"

Such were the mutual exclamations, while each grasped the hand extended to him.

"Thank God, my dear boy," said the rector, "I have found you at last! It has spared me a long and painful journey! But you are ill?" he added; "and how is this? In mourning! Have you, then, heard—?"

"Everything," replied the young man, mastering his emotion with a violent effort; "but tell me—"

The heart of the lover was so full that he could not pronounce the name of Ellen.

"Well—quite well!" said the rector, hastening to relieve him—for he perfectly comprehended to whom the question related. "I left her in the care of her uncle, Colonel Mowbray!"

An audible expression of gratitude broke from the lips of the youth—who, however he might dislike the brother of his murdered benefactor, was far from supposing him capable of descending to pander to the designs of his unprincipled rival.

The place of meeting was ill-suited for such explanations as they had to receive and make; but previously to adjourning to the hotel of our hero, Henry procured the *vévé* for his friend's return to England.

"More favoritism!" observed one of the disappointed group, as they left the *chancellerie*. "I shall complain, on my return, to the House!"

Although the speaker was a member of Parliament, his threat only procured for him the unwelcome distinction of being kept waiting to the last. The *attaché*, who overheard it, being nephew to one of the ministers, felt perfectly at his ease in disregarding it.

Those only who have had some dearly-loved or venerated friend torn from them by the hand of brutal violence, can conceive the agony with which Henry Ashton listened to the terrible details of the murder of his benefactor. To have wept—to have relieved his o'erfraught heart by tears—would have been consolation; but it was denied him.

"Do not think me ungrateful!" he said, fixing his blood-shot eyes upon those of his aged friend. "I cannot mourn until I have avenged him! Is there no clue?" he added, "to enable me to track the assassin to his den—to drag him, amid the execrations of the world, to justice! Cruel, pitiless, remorseless villain! The life whose purity an angel might have envied—so benevolent and good—cut short—and by such means!"

The rector informed him of the visit of old Martin, Lawyer Elwes, and Joe, to

the library; and the discovery of the gibern of the warrener in the recess at the end of the secret passage.

"What did it contain?" demanded the young man.

"Letters of ancient date," replied the rector, "which proved that Sir William had been cruelly deceived respecting the conduct of his unhappy wife; and that his former servant had been one of the unprincipled instruments; but not the least clue how they came there!"

"It needs none," muttered Henry; "I shall find it!"

As briefly as possible, he informed his kind old friend of all that had taken place in Rome: the perfidy and confession of Martingale—his discovery of Lady Mowbray—the death of Walter, and his ultimate conviction that he was the son of the late baronet.

"I do not think so!" observed Dr. Orme, after a few moments' reflection.

"Why not?" demanded his former pupil.

"Because I distinctly remember the marriage of the colonel—which was against the inclination of Sir William—and the birth of a son. Lady Mowbray's boy was not born till more than a year afterwards."

Hurried as these explanations were, they afforded the unhappy lover one consolation. Ellen, he believed, was well. Joe Beans and Susan were with her—and he knew he might rely upon the courage and fidelity of his early friend.

Despite the entreaties of the rector, who felt seriously alarmed for the health, if not the reason of our hero, Henry determined upon starting within an hour for Calais. Had it been possible, he would have given half his life to have annihilated the time and distance which separated him from England.

"As the carriage passed the Porte St. Denis, Dr. Orme for the first time mentioned the name of Meeran Hafaz. His affection for his adopted son made him dread their meeting.

"Do not name him!" exclaimed Henry, grasping his arm with convulsive passion. "When I have shed the life-blood of the cold, calculating, remorseless villain—trampled on his heart—offered to outraged justice and gratitude the only victim which can appease its claims—then, and then only, can I hear his name!"

His companion felt that it would be unwise to pursue the subject further. Mentally he offered up a prayer for the preservation of the youth, whom he loved like his own son; and for several hours they pursued their journey in silence.

At a late hour the following night, the tired travellers reached Dassin's Hotel, at Calais. Dr. Orme, yielding to the entreaties of his young friend, consented to retire to bed, for they found that the mail packet was not to sail till six in the morning.

Although he had endured, both mentally and bodily, enough to weaken a frame of iron, Henry could not sleep—the fever of his heart kept him awake and restless: en-

veloping himself in his travelling cloak—for the night promised to be a rough one—he crossed the market-place and made his way to the pier. The keen blast refreshed his burning cheek ; there was something congenial to his spirit in the raging elements—the dash of the billows, as they came roaring into the harbor, or broke in angry murmurs against the piles, soothed him.

He had taken one or two turns, when he encountered a naval officer wearing the British uniform, who regarded him attentively ; but our hero felt scarcely conscious that any one beside himself was treading the croaking planks.

" Surely I can't be mistaken?" thought the officer.

A second time they passed each other.

" What, Henry Ashton!" exclaimed the speaker, as they met for the third time ; " don't you know me?"

The wanderer looked up, and recognized the son of a gentleman whose estate was in the neighborhood of Carrow : they had often met, when boys, to play at cricket upon the common with their young companions.

" Fred Suckling, if I am not mistaken?" said our hero.

" Of course you are not!" said the young man, shaking him warmly by the hand. " I cannot tell you," he added, " how delighted I am to see you! Do you return with me?"

" Return!" repeated his friend, as if he scarcely understood the question.

Lieutenant Suckling explained to him that he commanded the government packet, which was to sail in a few hours.

" Yes—yes—I shall return with you!" eagerly answered the lover of Ellen ; " and oh, Fred, if the recollection of boyish days and pastimes has any weight with you, set every sail, stretch every nerve, to reach the shores of England! My heart is consuming in its own impatience, till I once more set my foot upon its strand!"

" Fear not," said the young man, " but we will whisk you over quickly enough! The wind is in our favor, and the little craft I have the honor to command worthy a better service—but we are at peace now. Harry," he added, a thought suddenly striking him, " if you have had any unpleasant adventure—any dispute with the authorities—perhaps you had better go on board directly with me! Once under the flag of old England, you are safe!"

The offer was gratefully declined.

" I am indeed most anxious to quit France," observed our hero ; " but not from the cause you name."

The officer of course pressed no further.

" Well," he said, after a pause, during which his companion, who had fallen into a reverie, continued to walk mechanically by his side, as if unconscious of his presence, " our meeting is most singular—but it is not the most singular one I have had to-day!"

Henry looked up in his face.

" And from Carrow, too!"

" From Carrow?"

" Ay—did you notice a tall, solitary man seated at the end of the pier?"

He to whom the question was put had noticed such an object, but turned short to avoid him—for the presence of a stranger was hateful to him.

" Yes—that is, I think I did!" was the reply.

" And did you recognize him?"

" No?"

" Had you done so," continued Lieutenant Suckling, " you would have discovered the face of an old acquaintance."

" In the name of heaven, whose?" demanded the listener.

" A fellow who has often chased me as well as yourself over the common and out of the woods of Carrow : not that either of us, I am sure, bear him any ill-will for that!"

" His name?" gasped Henry Ashton, his eyes flashing fire ; " for mercy's sake keep me no longer in suspense!"

" Will Sideler, the warrener," replied the officer, who began to think that his newfound friend had lost his wits. " I spoke to him, but he did not seem to recognize me. Excuse the frankness of my speech, Harry, but he seemed as mad as yourself, or perhaps a little more so—for he kept tossing his arms in the air, and muttering some unintelligible words. Perhaps, after all," added the young man, " he was only drunk!"

" It is with blood, then!" exclaimed our hero, fiercely ; " the blood of his victim—the good, the noble-hearted Sir William Mowbray—for something whispers me that he is his assassin ! Fred, you must assist me to secure that man!"

" Secure him!" repeated the bewildered lieutenant—who certainly had heard of the baronet's assassination, but never had the slightest surmise that Will Sideler was the murderer."

" Yes ; and bear him with us to England."

" Hadn't you better apply to the authorities?"

" And so give the villain an opportunity to escape!" interrupted Henry Ashton, impatiently. " No—no! it must be done at once ! The fiend who employed him is rich ! No chicanery will be left untried—no gold spared—to defeat the ends of justice ! I will take all the responsibility on myself!"

" You?"

" Yes—I ! and Dr. Orme, you know, is a magistrate : our worthy rector is the companion I spoke to you of."

Suckling was perfectly aware of the paternal interest which the benevolent clergyman had taken in the speaker, and how it was generally supposed he would leave him a considerable portion of his wealth : he began to think that his old playmate was not so mad as he appeared.

Determined to convince himself that the lieutenant had not been deceived, Henry drew his cloak around his face, so as effec-

tually to conceal his features. The two young men crept cautiously towards the end of the pier, where the murderer was standing, his gray hair—for the travelling cap which the agent had given him had fallen or been blown off—streaming in the wind. It was evident that the ruffian was very much excited : the brandy—great quantities of which he had drunk upon landing—had affected his brain.

As he stood gazing towards the shores of his native land, he fancied that some imaginary personage was beckoning him to return.

"The sea is between us!" they heard him mutter, "and I will not return! I have felt the hangman's grip once upon my neck—but I escaped him! Safe—safe—safe! Beckon away!" he added, with a yell of furious laughter ; point to the gash upon your throat ! they can't prove I did it ! or if they can, I am safe here!"

Henry Ashton pressed the arm of his companion.

"Are you convinced?" he said.

"Perfectly!" was the reply ; "but listen."

The murderer spoke again.

"You can't follow me!" shouted the drunken warrener, shaking his clenched fist with defiance towards the imaginary object he was addressing ; "the sea will not bear your footsteps! God!" he added ; "it is changed to blood! The avenger still pursues me! I won't be taken!"

The wretch, exhausted with the terrors which his conscience had conjured up, cast himself upon the pier, and hid his face in his hands.

"Can you still refuse me?" whispered our hero.

"No!" said the lieutenant, firmly ; "but we must proceed cautiously, and without alarming the authorities. In an hour I will have him safe under hatches on board the packet : once safe in my custody, I should like to see the Frenchman that would take him from me ! But I must seek the assistance of some of my men."

"Where will you find them?"

"At the Dover Castle, close to the gate at the end of the pier!" answered Suckling ; "you remain here to watch the villain, whilst I seek my tars to secure him."

CHAPTER XXIX.

Man in his foolish pride proposes,
But of the future as the past,
God in his wisdom still disposes,
Confounding all his aims at last.

OLD PROVERB.

It was with a loathing, sickening sensation, similar to that with which men regard the bloated toad or slimy reptile, that Henry Ashton continued, from his place of concealment, to watch the warrener, as he lay at the end of the pier, writhing in maudlin drunkenness and mental agony. The idea—for as yet he had no positive proof—that he saw stretched before him the assassin of his friend and benefactor, broke the long lethargy which had hitherto enthralled

him, and sent the warm blood rushing to his heart and brain. His shattered nerves resumed their elasticity. He felt as if they were suddenly transformed to steel. More than once he clenched his hands with nervous impatience, till the nails cut deeply into the flesh.

He felt an almost savage joy in contemplating him—for he felt that he was in his power : it was a joy

Like that the savage tigress feels,
When fortune to her sight reveals
Prostrate before her fury flung,
The robber of her ravished young.

"Monster!" he muttered, between his firm-set teeth ; "writhe on ! the noble blood thou hast shed is choking thee ! thy polluted soul is red—thine eye-balls seared with it as with the hangman's iron ! God!" he added, let not reason desert me, lest, in the desolation of my soul, the madness of my indignation, I wrest from the minister of justice his awful attribute, and rend the carriion limbs of this fell miscreant as the lion rends his prey!"

After a few minutes' pause, during which Will Sideler raised his head and gazed like a maniac round him, our hero advanced cautiously towards the spot where the murderer lay. Above the howling of the tempest and the roaring of the billows, which dashed their foaming crests against the piles of the pier, he distinctly heard the ruffian pronounce the name of Sir William Mowbray, coupled with broken words which sounded like a supplication for mercy.

He could endure no more ; but, dashing aside his cloak, he sprang forward, and stood before the astonished wretch like an avenging spirit—terrible in its mission—armed with no earthly strength.

"Merey!" he exclaimed ; "monster ! the angel's ear is deaf as thine has been : the blood-stifled groans of thy victims have filled it ! The gibbet waits thee—the curses of the yelling crowd—the execrations of the poor and fatherless, made doubly orphans by thy crime—the cord—the felon's grave!"

The warrener started to his feet, and, by the light of the beacon, which fell upon the spot where they were standing, he recognized the pale but well-known features of the speaker. He was bewildered—forgot for the moment that he was in France, and imagined himself at Carrow.

"Henry Ashton?" he faltered.

"Ay! Henry Ashton," repeated the youth, "and Will Sideler, the murderer!"

"It's a lie!" roared the ruffian, furiously ; "who dares to say so? there is no proof—and even if there were, you cannot touch me here ! I am right!" he added, looking round ; "I remember it all now : I am in France—free from prison—safe from the hangman's clutch : I felt it once—but he is dead—dead—dead! they cannot hang me now! ha—ha! prate of justice—I defy it and heaven!"

The wild, savage life of the warrener rose above the dashing of the waters and

the whistling winds, like the shrill cry of the night-bird.

As if to answer the defiance so impiously hurled towards heaven, the dark clouds above the sea were rent by a terrific peal of thunder, and a broad sheet of lightning illuminated for an instant the snow-crested billows, as they broke over the pier.

"Fool!" said the young man, "to brave its might at the very moment its hand is outstretched against thee! Dost think our meeting at such an hour, and in such a spot, the effect of a blind accident? No; by the simplest means Omnipotence still works its will—the punishment thou hast merited has at last o'er taken thee!"

"Has it?" said Will Sideler, with a sneer; for remorse and a sense of danger had partly sobered him. "Perhaps you will tell me by what right you interfere?"

"The right of nature," answered Henry, "which arms every honest man against the murderer! Fly where he will, the earth trembles at his footsteps—even the grave rejects him! Thou art doomed, Will Sideler—I tell thee thou art doomed! Thy limbs shall feed the ravens, and the kite and pyle shall perch on thy fleshless skull—thy bleaching bones shall swing from the gibbet's height, a sickening spectacle to earth and heaven! Felon—I arrest thee!"

"Boy!" exclaimed the ruffian, perfectly roused at last to a sense of his situation, and at the same time attempting to pass him; "the tree is not planted yet, from which to make the gallows upon which I shall hang!"

"You pass not!" said our hero.

"We shall see!"

With these words, the warrener sprang upon Henry Ashton, and grasped him in his sinewy, strong embrace. The youth shuddered for an instant with loathing and disgust, as he came in contact with the assassin, who mistook the tremor in his adversary's frame for terror. He was quickly undeceived.

"Boaster!" he muttered, "you tremble!"

"It is with hate, then!"

These were the only words uttered on either side, during the long and deadly struggle which ensued. Although between fifty and sixty years of age, Will Sideler was a fellow of uncommon strength, to which terror gave additional energy. He had tried many times to disengage the grasp which the lover of Ellen had laid upon his collar—but failed to succeed. Although, so young, it was of iron.

There was something fearful in the contest of these two men on such a lonely spot—the waves hissing and roaring round them—neither uttering a word. Finding that he could not release himself by fair means, the escaped felon suddenly released his hold of our hero, and drew his long clasp-knife from his pocket, then opened it with his teeth. A gleam of ferocious joy shot from his eyes as he raised his arm to strike, but Henry had seen the action, and caught with his disengaged hand the descending blade, which slightly wounded

him in the palm—still he only smiled. He felt that it was impossible that in a contest with a wretch whom he believed to be the murderer of his benefactor he could succumb; and the force of his conviction sustained him. With a violent effort, he wrenches the weapon from the grasp of the warrener, and cast it into the sea.

Sideler, who in his youth had been an expert wrestler, tried by every ruse to throw him—back fall and cross were alike unsuccessful. The breath of the ruffian at last became thick and heavy—it was evident that his strength was exhausting itself; whilst Henry Ashton's appeared to increase with each fresh effort.

Satisfied that he could not escape, the next thought of the murderer was of revenge.—He determined, if possible, to escape the gibbet by a voluntary death. Clasping his antagonist with both arms round the body, he raised him from the ground, and succeeded in carrying him to the end of the pier, which fortunately was guarded by a stout oaken railing. Twice did he attempt to lift him over, and plunge with him into the foaming surge beneath. The last time he reeled and staggered like a drunken man—then fell with our hero upon the spray-washed planks.

The combatants paused, as if by mutual agreement, to draw breath, but without relaxing their hold. After a few seconds, the contest was renewed, and their limbs became entwined like knotted serpents, in the embrace of hate. The veins and arteries of their necks and temples rose like cords, so violent were their struggles; whilst thick drops of sweat and blood chased each other down their cheeks.

At the time the scene we have endeavored to describe was being enacted, a party of English sailors, belonging to the government packet, were seated in the little parlor of the Dover Castle—a public house kept by an Englishman close to the Calais gate—so well known by Hogarth's inimitable picture. The men were waiting for the tide to serve. The house is well known as the rendezvous of a class of English residents, who find it more convenient to live abroad than at home—a set of sharks, who live by preying upon their countrymen—pleading their nationality as an excuse for borrowing or begging, as mendicants do their sorcs.

The valet of Meenan Hafaz, who had promised his master not to lose sight of the warrener till he had conducted him safely to Marseilles, and seen him safely on board the vessel which was to convey him to India, alarmed at the absence of his charge, had sought him in every *café* in the town. As a last hope, accompanied by a *laquais de place*, he made his way to the Dover Castle.

"Who is the land-lubber asking for?" demanded bluff old sailor, who overheard the valet's inquiries of the landlord.

The man explained to him that he sought a rough country-looking person who had, he feared, lost his way in the town.

"No fear of his being lost in *Caley!*!" observed another of the crew, "the *jenny darnes* picks up everybody and everything! Ax the boatswain if they dosen't—he knows the inside of the fiddle!"

"The fiddle?" repeated the perplexed valet.

"Monsieur mean de violin," said the *laquais de place*, "vat you call in Angleterre de *Nougat*?"

"The what?"

"De prison! It shall be all de same; but de shentleman is not dere. We speak if he vas of de concierge munific!"

"What's the French frog *parlevoing* about?" said the bluff son of Neptune who had first spoken. "I can tell the landsman where his messmate is!"

"Where?" eagerly demanded the servant.

"First let's bear a reckoning, and see what his figure-head is like," answered the sailor, "and take a squint at his rigging!"

"What does he mean?" inquired the valet, turning with a hopeless look to the landlord of the house—who, having been a sailor himself, perfectly understood his brother tar's phraseology.

"Describe him?" replied the host.

"Ay, how was he rigged?"

"Rigged?" replied the inquirer.

"He means dressed!" observed his interpreter.

"Lateen or square-rigged?" said the sailor, puffing the smoke in hasty whiffs from his pipe—a sure sign he was getting impatient. "Has he the cut of a pirate or a landsbark?"

"A seaman or a landsman?" whispered the landlord of the Dover Castle.

"Oh, a landsman, certainly!" answered the valet.

"And a fique-head like a shipwrecked parson's," inquired the purser, "or one of the king's hard bargains: fellows who go to sea to avoid the gallows at home?"

The servant could not but confess that the description might answer for that of his friend.

"Well," replied the tar after a few more whiffs, "you will find this precious friend of yours spinning a yarn to the fishes. I passed him upon the pier as I crowded sail to the Dover Castle; the lubber was tossing his fins about, and talking like the play-actor Poll that I once saw at Portsmouth.

He'd make a rum messmate!" he added; I shouldn't much care to sail in the same ship with him!"

"Why not?"

"Because I neither like his build nor his figure-head," said the old tar: I have seen many a better-looking fellow swinging at the yard-arm!"

Although Mr. Narcissus—the name of the valet—was extremely anxious to discover the lost companion of his journey, he was far too prudent a person to trust himself without additional precautions, on such a night as the present, on the pier. He dispatched the *laquais de place* in his stead, and returned at once to his hotel, where he

solaced himself as he best could, under the circumstances, with a bottle of genuine Lafitte, and a flirtation with the landlady.

He had not left the Dover Castle many minutes, before Lieutenant Suckling entered the little parlor. The sailors started to their feet in an instant; they knew, from the visit of their commander, ~~that~~ something—as the bluff old tar who had replied to the inquiries observed—"was up."

"Follow me, my men!" said the officer.

It needed no second command, for the speaker was exceedingly liked by his crew. In their way to the pier-head, he explained to them that his object was to get the warrener on board the packet as secretly and speedily as possible; for at that time no treaty of extradition existed between the two countries. Gold, he knew, would achieve anything with the French police: and, in a point of so much moment, Meeran Hafaz was not the man to spare it.

Four of the men were sent on board the vessel, which was lying close to the side of the inner basin, with orders to take one of the boats and row round to the mouth of the harbor. The rest accompanied their officer, to seek the assassin and Henry.

"Five guineas, my men," said the lieutenant, after he had given his instructions, "and a night on shore at Dover, if you succeed!"

"Ay—ay!" replied old Tom, the boatswain. I'm an old press-hand, and helped to man Duncan's fleet in Yarmouth Roads. We'll have the land-lubber under hatches in less time than the Polly takes to make three knots—and your honor knows what a clipper she is!"

As they approached the end of the creaking pier, whose rough, weather-worn planks groaned and trembled in the storm, like a living thing with the ague, Suckling looked anxiously round in order to discover Henry and the warrener; the waves were beating over the jetty with undiminished fury. He saw no one near.

"What can have happened?" he exclaimed. "Has the rascal escaped?"

Then the recollection that Henry Ashton, from his determined character, would never have quitted the man whom he believed to be the murderer of his benefactor with life, suddenly crossed him, and, clasping his hands, he murmured with a deep sigh:

"The villain must have murdered him!"

"Murdered him!" exclaimed the old tar; "I only wish he may—that's all! we'll show the Mounseers a specimen of British justice, and, if your honor only gives the word, bring the rascal to a drum-head court-martial, and hang him up at the yard-arm!"

"Belay there!" cried one of his messmates; "doesnt your honor see, just under the bow of the pier, *summit* very like a land-shark?"

Suckling darted through the foam and spray, which at regular intervals dashed over the jetty; and, close to the rail—

where the receding waves had washed them—lay the bodies of Henry and the warrener: both were insensible. The hand of our hero was firmly twisted in the long, gray hair of the assassin, his dress torn and stained with blood, from the fury of the encounter.

The lieutenant and his men instantly raised and separated them.

"God!" exclaimed the officer, who was supporting the form of his friend; he is dead! I am too late—too late!"

The boatswain, who had been chasing the hands and chest of our hero, fancied that he felt his heart beat.

"All right, captain! the gentleman's cable is not run out yet! Once on board the Polly, a snug hammock and plenty of warm grog will soon set him to rights, I warrant me!"

At this time they heard the voices of the sailors: despite the tempest and the force of the returning tide, the gallant fellows had rowed round to the pier head.

The difficulty was, how to get Henry Ashton and their prisoner—who also began to show signs of returning life—on board.

Sailors are never at a loss—they are as ready at a shift as a politician. A sail, which fortunately was lying at the bottom of the boat, was hastily rolled into the form of a hammock, and drawn up by the men upon the pier. The still breathing form of the lover of poor Ellen was first lowered, then that of the warrener. Lieutenant Suckling and his men descended by a rope, which they drew into the boat after them.

"Give way," said the officer, "with all speed to the Polly!"

The men replied with a cheerful "ay, ay, sir!" and the boat shot from the pier-head into the mouth of the harbor.

As the last man disappeared down the side of the jetty, a person who had been silently watching their proceedings stepped from the obscurity in which he had concealed himself, into the broad light cast by the beacon.

It was the *laguais de place*.

"Mine Got!" he exclaimed; "de English sailor dog have catch him!"

CHAPTER XXX.

Over the sea the bark we guide,
And gaily stirs its foaming crest;
The sailor woos his ocean bride,
And sinks 'mid waves and storms to rest,
Whilst the seameen screams his lullaby!

SONGS OF THE OCEAN.

DAYLIGHT was just beginning to dawn, when the mail-bags were brought on board the packet. Dr. Orme was already there; for, despite the fatigue he had undergone, Lieutenant Suckling no sooner saw his friend comfortably disposed of in his own berth, than he hastened to Dessin's Hotel, to inform the worthy rector of what had taken place, and escort him to the lively Polly.

Although the storm had subsided, there

was still considerable doubt whether the vessel would be able to quit the harbor, at the mouth of which the waves were running mountains high.

It was not without a feeling of secret envy—which most of our readers will consider very pardonable in such a case—that the rector received the assurance of the lieutenant, that his taking the sofa in his cabin—his berth was already occupied by Henry—would not in the slightest degree incommod him.

"I shall walk on deck," he said "for an hour or two, to get an appetite for breakfast."

"Walk!" repeated the old gentleman, whose ruddy complexion began to assume a decided bilious tint; "how can you talk of walking or eating in such a dreadful place? crossing over was bad enough, but returning will be ten times worse!"

The young sailor replied only by a good-humored smile: the sea was his home—he felt as much at ease on board his well-rigged little craft, as the speaker did in his pulpit at Carrow.

As he was about to quit the cabin, some one wrapped at the door.

"Come in!" said the lieutenant.

A midshipman made his appearance, to inform his commander that a boat had pulled alongside, with a message from the captain of the port, who wished to see the officer in command of the packet on shore.

"Does he?" said Suckling; "send word back that, if the captain of the port wishes to see me, he must come on board! Does he think I am mad, to quit my vessel at such a time? He is no sailor thought the speaker, "and will not venture to dim the lace of his uniform by donning it such a morning!"

As a matter of precaution, however, he gave directions to raise anchor—determined to put to sea at all hazards.

Lieutenant Suckling was busily engaged on deck, in seeing his orders properly executed, when the barge of the functionary rowed alongside the Polly, which was slowly making head to the mouth of the harbor: a middy hailed them, and inquired what they wanted.

"To speak with your commander," replied the port-captain, an unhappy-looking little man, who, wrapped in an immense cloak, sat shivering in the stern of the barge.

The ladder was let down, and the Frenchman mounted with the agility of a cat.

"Who are you, sir?" demanded the young officer, of a doubtful-looking personage, who was following up the ladder.

"*Le commissaire de police de Calais!*"

"Then, Mr. Commissary of Police," said the young man, "you do not set a foot on the deck of the Polly! I allow no interference with my command here!"

The functionary—who had been bribed by the valet—would have remonstrated, but the lieutenant ended the dispute by ordering two men to the gangway, with

orders to cut down the first person from the barge who tried to set a foot upon the deck of his vessel without his permission.

"With a *sacré Dieu!*" and something which sounded very much like "*Inglis dog!*" the disappointed *commissaire* slunk back into the barge.

"May I inquire to what happy circumstance," continued the speaker, "I am indebted for the honor of this visit on board his Britannic Majesty's ship the *Polly*?"

The captain of the port answered, that information had been laid that an Englishman had been entrapped on board, without any communication having been previously made to the authorities; and that he could not permit the packet to sail till the affair had been properly investigated.

"And pray, sir?" inquired Suckling, in a mocking tone, "have you considered how you will prevent it?"

The functionary observed that he was captain of the port.

"And I," said the young officer, "am commander of this vessel!"

"You must pass the batteries?" exclaimed the little Frenchman.

"We will do so," replied the lieutenant; "and if you will bear me company, you shall see how gallantly, with St. George's ensign flying at the fore! I doubt not but reflection will induce you to pause before you venture to insult it!"

The captain of the port appeared embarrassed.

"I must do my duty," he said.

"And I mine," observed Suckling, giving his orders to the men at the same time with the greatest coolness, to call all hands upon deck, and shot the guns. "Pray, Monsieur le Capitaine," he added, a thought striking him, "by how many persons did you say the information on which you are acting has been laid?"

"By one," was the reply.

"I thought that the law of France required *two*?" observed the commander; "rely upon it that your obstinacy in this affair will do you no service with your government—they have embarrassments enough already: it is a matter for the big-wigs, not sailors, to settle!"

"During the above interview, the vessel had continued to move slowly towards the bar at the end of the pier.

For a few moments the captain of the port reflected. He had done quite enough, he thought, to prove his zeal; added to which, his breakfast was ready on shore, and the motion of the *Polly* was becoming anything but agreeable to his feelings. Another consideration was, he had no longer the commissary of police to back him; and, to speak the truth, the little man did not possess the most exalted courage; but then, to make amends, his politics were unquestionable—his sister had married the first cousin of the *valet de chambre* of the Count d'Artois.

Such an alliance, under the elder Bourbons, would have made any man's fortune; in Louis Philippe's time an alliance with

the *blanchisseur* of the Rothschilds might have been better.

"Tis well, sir!" he said, trying to assume a look of offended dignity, the effect of which a sensation of sea-sickness unfortunately destroyed; "I shall take my leave, and report your extraordinary conduct to the minister!"

Suckling's first idea was to let him go—but he remembered his threat of the batteries, and determined to keep him on board, to prevent mischief. The consternation of the dapper little Frenchman became pitiable when he heard it: he felt assured that his stomach would never endure the tossing at the bar; then the idea of disgracing *La Grande Nation* by yielding to seasickness in the presence of the insolent English sailors, who never appear to have any stomachs to turn—it was horrible to contemplate.

"My duty demands my presence on shore," he said,

"Sorry I can't oblige you!" replied his tormentor; "we shall only just escape the turn of the tide as it is; besides, to a sailor like yourself, this land-breeze will only give an additional appetite!"

By this time they approached the bar at the mouth of the harbor, where the swell to a landsman was really terrific: the *Polly* danced merrily upon the billows, and dived and dived like a petrel in a storm; even the old boatswain confessed that he had never seen a craft behave better. The presence of the port-captain put the crew of the little vessel upon their metal; the orders of their officers were executed with a precision which the greatest martinet in the navy could scarcely have found fault with; but their seamanship was entirely thrown away upon the Frenchman.

At the last heave of the *Polly*, in crossing the bar, he heaved with it—nature could endure no more.

"This comes of feeding upon frogs!" observed a sailor to one of his messmates; "beef and biscuit will stand anything—no danger of preaching to the fishes upon that?"

Once clear of the bar, the barge, which had followed close in the wake of the *Polly*, was permitted to come alongside to receive the captain of the port, who—more dead than alive, his brilliant uniform considerably shorn of its lustre, his white plume draggled and soiled from the spray, till it resembled the long feathers in the tail of a fowl in wet weather—carefully descended.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he muttered, as he sank, shivering into his cushioned seat in the barge; "catch me going to sea again!"

The commissary, whose countenance was, if possible, of a yet more pallid hue than his own, looked as if he was of the same opinion; but the unfortunate wretch was too ill to speak.

About two o'clock the same day, the *Polly* arrived safely at Dover.

The impatience of our hero to pursue his journey would not admit of delay. Fatigue seemed to have no power over him: he had

recovered from the effects of his contest with the warrener, as if by the mere exertion of his indomitable will.

As fast as four post-horses could convey them, the carriage of Dr. Orme and his adopted son rolled along the road to London. In the first were the rector and Henry; the second, the blinds of which were down, contained the prisoner. Two servants, upon whose fidelity they could depend, rode with him to guard him.

For the present they were undecided whether to place him at once in the hands of justice or not. A letter, which they found on their arrival in town, from Elworthy, decided them upon taking the assassin with them to Carrow.

The lawyer informed them that, in consequence of some intelligence he had received, he had started the day before for Norfolk, whither he advised our hero to follow. He had written the letter in the vague hope that one or other of them might return in his absence. It concluded by adding that they would find him at the rectory.

"Not a word, my dear boy!" said the rector, in reply to Henry Ashton's entreaty that he would spare himself the fatigue of pursuing his journey. "Since I left that wretched packet—where, *par parenthese*, I must confess that Suckling conducted himself admirably towards us—I feel quite strong again; but, strong or weak, ill or well, I have found you at last, and do not intend to part with you!"

The youth replied to so much affection by a grateful pressure of the hand: his heart was too full for words. He was one of those natures kindness could melt, injustice or oppression only harden.

"What are we to do with our prisoner when we arrive?" he demanded, after a pause. "Send him to Norwich Castle?"

"Perhaps," replied the rector; "but for one night I can find a prison for him sure."

"Where?"

"In the old tower of Carrow Church," answered Dr. Orme. "It will not be the first time it has been used for such a purpose. The two Kitts, during their rebellion, used it to detain the citizens in till they paid ransom. His ransom, I fear, will only be paid by life!"

Although the two servants placed in the carriage to guard him, refused to answer Will Sideler a single question, the wretched man seemed to know instinctively whether he was being conveyed; and, strange to say, although he had partially recovered his strength, he made no attempt to escape. Perhaps he felt that, in his meeting with Henry Ashton, the hand of heaven had been visibly outstretched against him, and that it was hopeless to contend.

More than once during the journey he fell asleep, but his countenance became so convulsed, the expression of his features so horrible, that the domestics could not endure to look upon him: for their own sakes they awoke him.

The murderer had been dreaming.

"Thank you!" he said, in a humble tone, as the coachman of Dr. Orme shook him violently by the collar. "I don't want to sleep, it unnerves me!"

His two companions looked as if his appearance and groans whilst he slept had unnerved them.

"Ah, James!" he said, recognizing the man—who, like himself, was a native of Carrow—"this is a bad business! What do the people say about me at home?"

This was intended merely as a feeler: he wished to know if the public rumour had as yet connected his name with the murder of Sir William Mowbray; but the sturdy coachman, unlike most servants, cared little about chatting, and remained obstinately silent.

"Wont 'ee speak?" roared the warrener, beginning to feel excited.

Still not a word.

"Curse thee!" he said; "where beest thee taking me to?"

"To the gallows!" replied the man, impatiently; "dout rave so—thee will arrive there soon enough!"

With a deep groan of mental anguish, the unhappy wretch sank back upon the seat of the carriage.

He asked no more questions of his companions.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Since fortune cannot recompense me better
Than to die well, and not my master's debtor.

SHAKSPEARE.

LAWYER Elworthy, Joe Beans, the Khan, and Susan, were all assembled in the library of the rectory; Mrs. Jarmy, the late housekeeper at Carrow, was also present: the good old lady declared it to be her firm conviction that Martin, could he be consulted upon the operation which was to restore him to the use of reason, would not weigh the risk of his life a single instant against the faintest chance of success.

"I would not," she added; "to avenge my dear master's murder, and drag the villain to justice who committed it, I could sacrifice it freely!"

"If he survives it but one hour," observed the Khan, "it will be sufficient for the purposes of justice; for, during that hour, he will be in the full possession of his reason."

"Would to heaven Master Harry or the rector wor here!" observed Joe, who had a great horror of subjecting poor old Martin to an operation, the result of which was doubtful in his mind; for he had more faith in the zeal than the skill of the renegade; indeed, a greater degree of responsibility rested upon him than any other person, except the Khan; for, without his assistance or that of Chatteborough—who would have nothing to do with it, partly from fear, and partly from the affection which he began to feel for his harmless charge—it would be impossible to induce the idiot to consent to it. Their voices he

still remembered ; they were the only persons, since the day when his old enemy the warrener attempted to remove the cap with the plate which guarded his shattered skull in the churchyard, whom he permitted to enter it.

True, it was possible to force him to submit ; for, once in the groove which the renegade had invented, resistance would be impossible ; the danger was, that the anger and agitation of the patient might cause a determination of blood to the head, bring on fever or apoplexy, and so defeat their aim.

" You must decide quickly," said the Khan, " or Miss De Vere will be lost to her lover for ever ! "

" And I swore to protect her—to guard her—in the absence of Master Harry !" muttered Joe.

Susan whispered in his ear, that " he had done his best to keep his promise."

" But I have not kept it ! " replied the honest rustic, in a tone of self-reproach. " God forgive me ! " he added ; " I shall never forgive myself if anything happens to the old man ; but since there is no other way, it mun e'en be so. I will assist you."

" At once ? "

" At once."

" And your mind is fully made up ? "

" Fully ! " replied the humble friend of our hero. " I have no great wit—and what I have, I sometimes fear I don't exactly make the best use of ! God forgive you if you deceive me ! "

" And what should I gain ? " demanded the renegade.

" I know, I know," muttered Joe, " I am unreasonable ; but you must acknowledge that I am in a sad strait ! Is there any other way to save her ? "

" There is none," said the Khan.

" I have often thought," said the young man, " that you knew more than you choose to tell about Sir William's death.

All eyes were turned upon the mysterious man, who appeared, however, to pay but little attention to their scrutiny.

" I know nothing ! " he said, slowly ; but *I suspect much !* Unfortunately, my suspicions are not evidence—and if they were, I could not give them.

" Why not ? "

He remained silent.

Fortunately, they were spared further discussion by the sudden appearance of two carriages, drawn by post-horses dashing up the avenue.

" The rector ! " exclaimed Mr. Elworthy.

" Master Harry ! " said Joe, with a shout of joy—for he had recognized the pale features of his friend, even at that distance ; and, forgetful of everything but the happiness of once more beholding him, he rushed to the porch, to welcome the long-absent wanderer back.

A faint smile—the first which for weeks had been seen upon the pale countenance of Henry Ashton—appeared there, as he returned the honest grasp of Joe Beans.

" I must cry ! " said the poor fellow,

vainly attempting to hide the tears which coursed each other rapidly down his cheeks ; " if I don't, my heart will burst ! Oh ! Harry—Master Harry—where has 'ee been all this time ? and I writing day after day, without once getting a line in return to say that you were alive ! Not that I thought 'ee had forgotten me—I knew 'ee too well for that ! "

" I never received one of them ! " replied our hero ; " the most shameless villainy has been at work to intercept them ! Mine to you, I doubt not, have equally mis-carried ! "

" This is no place," observed Mr. Elworthy—who was as methodical in his ideas as conduct—" for explanations ; we have much to tell, and doubtless much to hear. But whom have you here ? " he added, pointing to the second carriage.

" An old acquaintance of yours, if I mistake not," said the rector ; " when once you have seen him, I feel assured there will be no need to recommend him to your care ! "

The vehicle stopped, and the door was opened. First, James the coachman alighted, and then Will Sideler, and the second domestic : a half-subdued yell of horror and disgust saluted the ruffian as he descended.

" In the name of heaven ! " said the lawyer—who, not having looked at the papers for several days, was ignorant of the warrener's escape from Newgate—" how came that wretch at liberty ? "

A few words briefly explained all that he had to learn respecting his escape, and capture in France. He instantly suggested the propriety of his being sent at once to the county gaol.

" No," said the Khan ; " since accident hath sent him here, let him remain. When poor old Martin is restored to reason, as in a few hours he will be—he may wish to have a few words with the warrener ! "

Up to the present moment, Will Sideler had shown a bold, determined front towards his enemies ; but at the sound of the renegade's voice, his countenance fell. He felt that the hour of retribution was near.

To the great indignation of the butler, the assassin for the present was ordered to be confined in the cellar, with no less than three men to guard him, and the strong oaken door doubly locked upon him.

After having seen him properly secured, and ascertained that escape was impossible, the party re-adjourned to the library.

Poor Dr. Orme ! it is impossible to describe the sigh of satisfaction with which he sank into his easy chair. He felt as if every joint in his frame had been dislocated, yet he did not complain—for the son of his adoption was beside him.

It is extraordinary what even weak and indolent natures will endure, where their affections are concerned.

Several hours passed in questions, explanations and replies, before Henry Ashton and his friends mutually understood the nature of the events which had occurred during their separation.

"Poor Mr. Walter!" said Joe Beans, with a sigh, as his young master concluded the history of his assassination. "He was a true friend, and a noble gentleman—pity he had not a better father."

"I do not think," said our hero, "that Colonel Mowbray was his father."

"Who then?" demanded the Khan, with surprise.

"My late benefactor, Sir William Mowbray," replied the young man; "despite the opinion of my venerable friend," he added, turning to the rector, "the more I reflect upon the subject, the more I am convinced."

Before separating for the night, it was arranged that Colonel Butler, the magistrate, who had so warmly interested himself on the occasion of Sir William Mowbray's death should be sent for; also two eminent surgeons from Norwich, of the names of Martineau and Dalrymple.

Despite the remonstrances of the rector, Henry insisted upon starting instantly for the farm.

"My dear boy," said the old man, "after all you have endured, think of—"

"And what have my kind uncle and his dame not suffered?" said the young man, interrupting him; "I can measure their distress by my own! I must go—it is my duty!"

"You are right!" replied the rector, with an approving smile. "I never thought of their feelings; like most men, I only consulted my own! Good-night! and heaven bless you!" Somehow, that boy is always right! he mentally added, as his adopted son, accompanied by Joe, set out to walk towards the farm—for he had declined the carriage; he felt as if the bracing air of the common would do him good—would still the fever of his blood and the anxious beating of his heart. True, he had returned to his native land, after so many trials, in safety; but the murder of Sir William was still to be avenged, and Ellen rescued from the hands of her persecutors; as yet, he possessed no clue to the place of her confinement.

His companion, in the exuberance of his joy at once more seeing his young master—as he loved to call him—scarcely found time to whisper a word of adieu to Susan; he longed to be with Henry alone, to pour forth his feelings—to justify his faithlessness to his charge.

"Master Harry," he said, as they entered the long, shady lane which led to the farm, "when you left for furrin parts—I have lost all desire to see them now—I promised you that I would watch over Miss Ellen?"

"You did, Joe!"

"Don't 'ee blame me," added the honest fellow, "if I haven't done all that I promised: it wor not the fault of my heart—that wor right enough—but of my head; I ought to ha' shot un!"

"Shot whio?"

Joe explained that he alluded to Meeraan Hafaz.

"And I would ha' done it," he said, "if

I had only been assured that you'd ha' thought I had acted rightly! Pity I didn't: thee wouldst have been happy now—and I—no matter where I should ha' been!"

"Not for worlds!" exclaimed our hero; he is reserved for me! By heavens, I should hate the man who stepped between me and my revenge! Joe," he continued, shaking him warmly by the hand "you were my first friend; heaven gave me the second one—as true, as devoted as yourself: he is gone! I shall never seek another!"

"Thee dost not blame me then, Master Harry?"

"Blame you!" repeated Henry: "God bless you Joe, for your fidelity and friendship to me! I shall never be able to repay you!"

The honest fellow was repaid in those few kind words from the speaker; a weight was removed from his heart: his friend had done him justice.

Silently they made their way towards the farm.

Farmer Ashton and his dame were seated in their little parlor, talking, as usual, of the absent one, the recollection of whom mingled in their daily occupations, and whose return was the theme of their constant prayer. The mind of the old man had been pondering over the communication which Chettleborough had made respecting the visit of Martin to the abbey. At times he was inclined to think his informant had been misled by the poor harmless maniac's ravings. More than once he wished he had consulted Joe Beans upon the subject, but he had only seen Joe once since his return to Carrow—for, as our readers are aware, he had left his service for that of the rector.

"Has Joe been to-day?" he inquired, addressing his dame, who sat listlessly by the chimney-nook.

"No; what does 'ee want wi' un?"

"Nothing—that is, nothing particular!" replied the farmer, relapsing into his former moodiness.

The curiosity of the old lady was roused.

"I tell 'ee what it is, Matthew," she began, "I have been a good wife to thee—worked hard and late?"

"True," said her husband, looking up.

"Our butter," continued the dame, "has been the crack of the market; and as for poultry—you know what that has brought?"

"What does 'ee mean?" demanded the bewildered Matthew.

"Why I mean that thee hast a secret from thee wife—that's what I mean. Ever since old Chettleborough called thee out into the garden, there has been a weight upon thee mind! Tell it Matthew—tell it; if it be anything touching our poor Harry," she added, bursting into tears, "the Lord will give me strength to bear it!"

Farmer Ashton took the hand of his wife, and was about to reply to her, when the door of the room opened, and Joe Beans, his countenance flushed and radiant with smiles, entered the room.

"Ah, Joe!" said the old man, "I wor just wishing to see thee!"

"Likely—likely!" replied the young man; "and I wor wishing to see thee and dame! I guess I be the pleasantest visitor thee hast seen for many a long day!"

"What dost mean lad? has 'ee been drinking?"

"No!"

"What then?"

"I—I be almost afraid to tell 'ee!"

What is there in the world so quick as the instinct of woman's love? Dame Ashton at once divined that he had some intelligence to communicate respecting her nephew.

"Thee hast had a letter, Joe?"

"No, no, missus!"

"No!" she repeated, in a tone of disappointment; "I thought thee had—I am sure I thought thee had!"

At that moment there was a slight noise in the outer room, and Bird's-eye, a favorite old dog of the farmer's—half setter and half lurcher—set up a joyous bark. The farmer and his dame both remembered that the faithful animal used to welcome the return of their nephew with just such another. Both of them turned very pale.

"Dame!"

"Farmer!"

These were the only words they could utter. Each cast an imploring look upon Joe Beans, as if to entreat him to relieve a suspense which, from its intensity, was worse even than disappointment.

"Cheer up!" said the young man; "there be news of Master Harry—only I wor afraid to tell it you too soon."

"He has returned!" exclaimed the dame, her attention once more excited by the barking of the dog. "I am sure he has! Listen how the old thing whines with joy! Harry! Harry!"

At the sound of the voice of one who had been like a mother to him, our hero, unable longer to restrain his feelings, rushed into the little parlor; and whilst he extended a hand to his uncle, clasped the dame in an affectionate embrace.

"God bless 'ee, Harry!" sobbed the old man; "thee beest welcome back!"

Welcome!" repeated the dame; "ay, that he is—as sight to the blind, as health to the sick! Where should he be welcome, if not here? Thee wilt not leave us again Harry?" she added, gazing upon him with pride and affection; "home be home, tho' it be humble; though farmer and I have scarcely found it home without thee!"

"I have had enough of foreign travel," said the young man, with a sigh; "I shall never willingly quit England again, I assure you!"

A loud "Thank God for that!" from the farmer, denoted how heartfelt was the satisfaction the promise afforded him.

"Thee beest pale, thin, and worn, Harry! Do tell us what has happened? Is there anything money can do to make 'ee happy? Matthew and I are old, and require but little: do we, farmer?"

Her husband made no answer: he knew, better than his wife, that the unhappiness of his nephew was occasioned by a cause which no wealth could remove.

The excitement of the meeting over, the energy which had hitherto supported the wanderer through all his trials, began to yield to the cravings of nature for repose. Even the loquacious dame, alarmed by the pallor of his cheek, insisted upon his retiring to rest. A few moments saw him asleep once more upon the clean but rustic bed which he had so often pressed in infancy.

The old dog just mentioned would accompany her young master to the door of his chamber, where she obstinately remained, despite the repeated attempts of Joe Beans and the farmer to call her away: the faithful brute only wagged her tail and uttered a low whine.

Henry Ashton had a singular dream that night: he dreamed that Ellen and himself were both seated in the old Gothic library at Carrow Abbey, when Sir William Mowbray appeared to them, with a countenance radiant with joy—such as it must have been in youth, ere the energies of his soul were bowed by sorrow, or the sense of unmerited shame corroded the life-stream of his being. He thought that the recluse blessed both him and Ellen in his dream, and vanished from their sight: so deep was the impression which it made upon his mind, that even the fatigue and deep slumber into which he had fallen did not obliterate it from his memory—he awoke with it fresh upon his recollection.

The sun was streaming brightly into the room, as, remembering the many important objects he had in view, he started from his bed. The old household clock struck eight as he descended.

When farmer Ashton heard of the intended operation upon poor old Martin, he expressed a determination to accompany his nephew to the rectory. The information he had received might be of use or not: he determined, therefore, to act according to the opinion he might form of the state of the groom's mind. He saw that Henry's health, although his resolution enabled him to bear gallantly up, was severely shaken, and he feared to agitate or unsettle him unnecessarily.

Joe Beans was invited to share the plenteous breakfast in the little parlour. Neither the dame nor her husband would hear of so true a friend as he had proved himself to our hero, resuming his old seat in the kitchen—nor would Henry have permitted it.

"What does 'ee think of this man," demanded the farmer, "who has promised to restore Martin to his senses?"

"I know but little of him," replied his nephew; "but that little is in his favour. I have reason to think he would serve me."

Joe Beans corroborated the opinion of his young master. He related the conduct of the Khan on the night of Sir William's funeral.

"Do not think," said the farmer, after a pause, "that I am prompted by a vain curiosity! But I confess I am most anxious to see this man."

Old Chatteborough had told him something which had set him thinking. It was finally settled that they should all three ride over to the rectory together.

It was amusing to see the zeal with which the farmer's men saddled the horses for the party. Two of them all but quarrelled who should perform that office for the favourite pony of their young master. Whilst they were disputing the point, Joe Beans quietly stepped into the stable, and saddled it himself.

"Ah!" ejaculated the elder of the two; "Joe Beans again—nothing but Joe! He hold his head up so high since he be to Lunnon, there be no coming near him!"

"Thee beest a cross-grained toad!" said his companion, who was equally vexed, but more just than himself. "Joe be a good lad, ready to do a kind turn to any one!"

And so he was.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Will you not see it, sir? the thing will be
Both rare and curious. *OLD PLAY.*

OUR readers, we feel assured, have not forgotten the elopement of Captain Elton from Bungalore Hall, with the only child and heiress of Sir Jasper Pepper—the sudden death of the bridegroom upon his wedding night—or how the indignation of the enraged little East India director, who had followed the fugitives to London, was suddenly appeased by the words which his old friend and companion, General Bouchier, whispered in his ear: which words were nothing less than an assurance to the angry father, that he would marry the widowed bride himself, and so accomplish the long cherished scheme of both their lives—of uniting their vast estates.

Had such a thing been possible, the selfish old bachelor would infinitely have preferred that the marriage of the broad acres, five per cents, exchequer bills, and India scrip, should have taken place by proxy; but his nephew's wretched match, as he termed it, with the portionless daughter of Lady Harebell, had deprived him of the only fitting representative on the occasion. In other words, he was compelled either to abandon his plan, or espouse the mourning widow himself.

When General Bouchier—who had never loved any human creature in the world, save himself—reflected upon his engagement, how grateful he would have felt for another nephew, provided, of course, that he was single, and more obedient than Captain Herbert had been. Still he evinced no disposition to retract; on the contrary, as soon as the first three months of widowhood—which is all that is required of those that have time to mourn—had expired, he started to visit the lady—we beg pardon—

her acres, five per cents, and India scrip—at Bungalore Hall.

On his arrival, he thought her plainer and more disagreeable than ever; yet his smile was as bland, and his manner as soft as ever. To do the old soldier justice, if his heart was as hard as the diamond, he displayed also the polish of the gem upon his surface.

Sir Jasper and his future son-in-law were at breakfast, *tête à tête*. The young lady, who was anything but in love with her elderly suitor, under plea of indisposition, chose to keep her room. The servant had just placed the post-bag upon the table.

"For you, general," said the baronet, handing him several letters, which he had sorted from the contents of the bag.

His guest threw the first one that he opened impatiently into the fire: it was from his now repentant nephew, and dated from a cottage near Richmond, where he was residing with his bride. The passion which had induced him to brave his uncle's wrath, had yielded to the satiety of possession and the chill of poverty: the lean goddess, after all, is the only test of love.

"The idiot!" muttered the old soldier; "Esau, who sold his birthright for a mess of pottage, was a sage in comparison with him! to renounce such a fortune for a woman!"

"From your nephew?" said Sir Jasper, looking up from the *Times*, where he had been reading the quotations of the Stock Exchange.

General Bouchier nodded in the affirmative.

"All comes of not bringing young men up to business!" continued the speaker; "if, instead of buying him a commission, you had placed him in my counting-house, we should never have been pestered with such folly—he would have learned the value of money: city men seldom forget that cash is power—everything."

The soldier winced: he had a profound contempt for trade.

"I must do something for the fellow!" he said; "get him handsomely out of the country!"

Sir Jasper suggested a commercial appointment in India—which was declined. The heartless uncle recollected the rank he had held there—the figure he had made. The idea of any relative of his going out in any other than a high civil or military capacity, was humiliating to his pride.

"Thank you;" he said, "but I have already decided on the silly fellow's future career."

"Indeed!"

"Yes! Liverpool promised me a vice-consulship for him at Timbuctoo, or one of the Friendly Islands: he will be out of the way there!"

And with this cool observation the subject was dismissed from his mind: and yet for many years General Bouchier had considered Herbert as his heir—indulged him in every extravagance—encouraged him in his career of selfishness and vice.

A servant announced Colonel Butler.

"At home!" said the baronet. "What the deuce," he added, as the footman left the breakfast-room, "can bring Butler here at such an extraordinary hour?"

"Are you intimate with him?" inquired his guest.

"Not particularly."

The general shrugged his shoulders, merely observing, that people did such odd things in the country.

The object of Butler's visit was very soon explained: he called to request the presence of his brother magistrate, Sir Jasper Pepper, at the rectory, with the view of witnessing the operation which the Khan was about to perform on poor old Martin, and receiving and witnessing any disposition he might make, should his reason be restored, as they anticipated.

"Is it possible," exclaimed the little East India director, "that you can lend yourself to such a proceeding?"

"Quite possible," gravely replied the colonel.

"Why, the man has been an idiot ever since the night of Sir William Mowbray's death?"

In reply to this objection, his visitor informed him that he had consulted both Martineau and Dalrymple on the subject: that both those eminent practitioners had admitted the possibility, although they doubted the probability of success.

"At any rate," he added, "the attempt is worth the trial. I consider it a reproach to the county that the head of one of our noblest families should have been murdered—as Sir William is proved to have been—and his assassin still at large!"

The East India director—the man of script and consols—appeared undecided. He looked at General Bouchier, as if for advice; but the latter personage seemed plunged in a profound reverie—perhaps he was thinking of his bride.

"I really don't see, began Sir Jasper, how my presence can facilitate the inquiry! Dr. Orme is himself a magistrate!"

"It certainly is not *indispensable!*" replied Colonel Butler, with a smile, which he well knew would pique the vanity of the old man; "as an affair in which the honor of the county and the feelings of the oldest families are concerned, I thought you might naturally wish to be present; in fact, that your absence, being so near the spot, would be remarked upon: of course you are the best judge! Good-morning, Sir Jasper Pepper!"

And the speaker rose to depart.

"Shall I be indiscreet in offering to accompany you, colonel?" demanded General Bouchier, waking up from his reverie.

The active magistrate assured him that his presence would afford them pleasure.

"I too, of course, shall be there," said the baronet, addressing his visitor; "from my rank and position in the county—as Colonel Butler justly observed—my absence might be thought strange and unneighborly!"

In less than an hour the party started for the rectory.

About the same time that the general had been discussing his breakfast at Bangalore-hall, his nephew, and a friend well known in the clubs and sporting-circles of the metropolis as The Major—but whose real name was Mottram—were strolling, *en robe de chambre*, in the garden of a pretty cottage ornée, on the banks of the Thames, near Richmond. Isabel had not yet made her appearance. Once or twice in the course of their promenade Herbert paused—looked impatiently at his watch, and cast reproachful glances towards the windows of his wife's dressing-room.

"Too bad, by Jupiter!" he said. "I seldom take more than two hours to dress—nay, I have done it in an hour and a half; and here is Isabel not down yet!"

"So soon!" said his friend, with a smile. Herbert shrugged his shoulders.

"Your wife is a very charming woman?"

"Humph! ye-es!" observed the bridegroom.

"And ladies have their privileges," added the major.

"So have husbands," replied the ex-captain of the guards—for he had been compelled to sell out; "and you forget that I have been a husband these three months! In fact, major, I cannot conceal from myself that my susceptibilities have been played upon—the generosity of my nature taken advantage of—that I have sacrificed myself! I have lost a princely fortune for a caprice—a toy! Isabel," he added, with a gravity which made his companion smile, "has no mind—positively nothing intellectual about her! Now there is nothing I adore so much as the mind of a woman—beauty is insipid in comparison with it!"

As the speaker uttered this, his thoughts reverted, most probably, to the fortune of his uncle, and the five per cents and India scrip of Sir Jasper Pepper—all chance of which he had forfeited by his folly, as he termed it.

"Your uncle will relent," said the major. "We shall soon have you amongst us again!"

"Never!" exclaimed Herbert, passionately. "You do not know what a vindictive, cold-blooded fellow he is! I have thwarted the dearest wish of the shrivelled, selfish thing he calls his heart! He will never forgive me!"

"Pooh! pooh!" interrupted his friend.

"More," continued the speaker: "he is about to marry the daughter of old Pepper himself—he, with his bachelor habits, prejudices, and vices! Judge, after that, what chance there is of his ever pardoning the man who mixed such a dose for him!"

"Not much of his pardoning the man who mixed it, I confess," observed Mottram, fixing his eyes with a searching expression upon his companion; "but I think he would prove very grateful to the one who prevented his swallowing it!"

"Prevented it! How?"

"By taking it for him."

With all his love of mind in woman, Herbert possessed but very little discernment of his own. He was perfectly aware, from the tone the conversation had taken, that his friend *meant* something—but what the something was, puzzled his imagination.

"I don't exactly see," he drawled, at the same time passing his delicate white fingers through his flaxen poodle curls—his usual resource when, to use a college phrase, he did not feel up in his subject—"how any other man's marriage with Miss Pepper—or rather Elton's widow—would to heaven the fellow had lived!—should call forth the general's gratitude! it's the estates he wants to marry!"

"Suppose you were to marry her?" whispered the major.

"If you jest!" exclaimed Herbert; "the law would call that burglary or bigamy—I don't exactly remember which, but something decidedly unpleasant!"

"Suppose," continued the tempter—"of course I only put it by way of supposition—that it were possible to restore you your liberty—place you in a position legally to become the husband of the heiress of Sir Jasper Pepper—do you think such an event would reconcile you to your uncle?"

"My dear fellow," replied the ex-captain, with a sickly smile, "it would enable me to make my own terms with him! He would pay my debts as readily as his laundress's bill—and add at least fifty thousand as a *cadeau* upon the wedding morning!"

The speaker felt so interested in the conversation, that he ceased to look at his watch, or cast reproachful glances towards the window of his wife's dressing-room. Taking his friend by the arm, he drew him into a retired walk, still further from the house, observing that they would find it cooler there.

"I am quite cool," said the major.

For some time they continued to walk in silence: neither liked to throw aside the mask, and expose the ulcerous thing he called his heart to the other. Herbert was the first to speak.

"What do you mean, Mottram?" he said; "to hear how you rattle out, one would imagine it possible to dissolve my marriage with Isabel!"

"Is it possible?" was the reply; and again there was a pause.

"How?"

"In a hundred ways," replied the tempter; "but, pardon me, my dear fellow," he added; "my pity for the blight of your hopes has outrun my discretion! I had not the slightest intention to offend."

"I am not offended," answered Herbert; "indeed, it is scarcely possible you could offend me! I could bear much from you—we are such old friends!"

The two gentlemen shook each other by the hand.

"Of course," continued the speaker,

"you would not suggest anything improper?"

The major made no reply.

"That is *very* improper!" added the ex-captain; "but you have roused my curiosity, and I confess I should like to hear one of those hundred ways which you alluded to explained."

"I have observed that your wife," whispered Mottram, "is proud?"

"Very."

"And vain?"

"As most women."

"And a little capricious?"

"True."

"And very resentful—to say nothing of a slight dash of jealousy in her composition. Such a temper," added the Major, with diabolical calculation, "might be easily worked upon to forget her marriage vow. I need not point out to you the consequences—divorce, and liberty for both parties to marry again: such are some of the numerous accidents to which wedded life is subjected."

The husband of Isabel had listened with deep attention to the scheme so artfully concocted. He saw not only its feasibility, but the advantage to be derived from it. The character of his friend left no doubt upon his mind but that the major was himself the Lothario he alluded to.

"There is no hope—fear, I mean," he replied, "that Isabel will ever play me false!"

"How so?"

"She is too fond of me."

The major smiled at what he deemed the conceit of Herbert. His companion saw it, but did not think proper to notice it. It was not his game to quarrel with him—at least, for the present. There was a vein of natural cunning in his disposition, which even those who had known him longest, and most intimately, had never given him credit for. Perhaps it had hitherto lain dormant. If so, the approach of poverty very soon developed it.

"I would bet you twenty thousand pounds," he said, "that you could not find a man to rival me with Isabel!"

Mottram quietly took out his pocket-book, and began to write.

"Good gracious! what are you doing?"

"Booking our bet!" answered the major, without moving a muscle.

"No names—the thing is really so ridiculous!" observed the ex-captain of the guards.

"Of course not!" said the cool-blooded villain. "But, Herbert, recollect there must be no jealousy between us! Give me fair play!"

"You!" observed his friend, with real or pretended surprise. "Why, you can't be serious?"

"Can't I?"

"What, you!—rival me! Oh! come, come, Mottram, the jest has been carried quite far enough! I am not a vain man; but the idea of your rivalling me is really too ridiculous!"

"It may appear so; and, under ordinary circumstances, would really be so," said the major, willing to soothe the mortified vanity of the speaker. "But, as you yourself confessed, Mrs. Herbert is a woman possessed of much beauty, but very little mind!"

"That's true; and I adore mind."

"Like most husbands, continued the tempter, "you are careless?"

"Humph!—a little."

"At times, perhaps, harsh—at least, what wives consider harsh. On these failings I build my hopes. The awakening from the intoxication of the honeymoon to the activity of married life, is, perhaps, the most trying moment of a woman's life. She fancies then she is no longer loved; pouts at being treated like a mortal, instead of being worshipped as a goddess. In short, at such a moment let any one skilled in the heart of the sex step in—grant him a tolerable person, a persuasive tongue—and ten to one but she falls!"

Whilst the speaker was thus artfully dictating to Herbert the line of conduct he should pursue, Isabel, who at length had completed her toilette, not finding the gentlemen in the breakfast-room, sought them in the garden. Despite the utter worthlessness of his nature, her unworthy husband could not avoid a blush as she approached.

"Good morning! said the unsuspecting girl—for in years she was little more—extending a hand to each.

Herbert pretended not to see the action, but looked at his watch. The major raised the hand to his lips.

"I fear I have detained you?" she said.

"Not longer than usual!" dryly observed her husband. "But punctuality is such a vulgar virtue!"

Isabel might have retorted; for Herbert was one of the most irregular persons in the world. On the contrary, she took his arm, and, looking into his face with a smile, sought to woo him into better humour.

"Don't be angry, George!" she said. "I promise you that I will not keep you waiting again. I'll be down at the very first dinner-bell."

"I don't dine at home."

"Not dine at home!" repeated his wife, with a look of disappointment. "Where do you dine?"

"At my club, madam," was the churlish reply. "And very soon I expect I shall be forced to breakfast there; for the irregularity of this house is intolerable."

With these words, which sounded doubly harsh in the ears of Mrs. Herbert, from being uttered in the presence of a visitor, her husband dropped the arm which still rested upon his, and proceeded, with rapid strides, towards the house.

A deep sigh broke from the heart of Isabel.

"Take my arm, dear Mrs. Herbert!" said the major, in one of his softest tones; "George is terribly out of humor this morn-

ing. I never saw him so capricious—so unjust before! Nay, I could almost call him cruel—so soon after his marriage, too! You must show a little spirit," he added, insidiously, "or he will positively tyrannize over you!"

The insulted wife dashed aside a tear, and, taking the arm of her disinterested adviser, followed the steps of her husband to the house. During the breakfast, she did nothing but coquette with their visitor. Poor Isabel! she was like a child playing with a rattlesnake.

Directly after breakfast Herbert went to town, without a word of excuse for his unkindness. As his wife, who really loved him, saw him about to depart, she started from her seat, and would have followed him. It would have been, she felt, so consoling to have received one kiss, or even a pressure of the hand. Her visitor, unhappily, restrained the natural impulse of her heart, by observing, that "she really spoilt-ed her husband."

"How?" she inquired with a look of surprise.

"By showing him the hold he has upon your affections. I need not remind a woman of your discernment, my dear Mrs. Herbert, that my friend George, who is one of the best fellows in the world, is a little vain?"

Isabel could not avoid mentally admitting that he was vain.

"If he saw that you cared for him less, he would be more attentive."

"True!"

"Less capricious; it is the perfect security he feels which leads him to indulge in these little ebullitions of temper."

"What can I do?" said the inexperienced wife, who, for the first time since her marriage, began to feel very unhappy. "What would you advise?"

"I!" replied the major, laughing. "Oh, I am one of the very worst counsellors in the world you can consult! Stay, I have it—suppose you make him jealous!"

Isabel started at the proposition, and was about to repel it, when the recollection that it was by working upon his jealousy she had secured his hand, reconciled her to the idea.

"You are right!" she said; "quite right! Vanity and pride are the keys to his affection: I will make him jealous!"

Major Mottram smiled.

When a woman once decides upon making her husband jealous, she has taken the first step towards the ruin of her domestic peace; and yet, how often do we see them fall into the snare, reckless or misjudging of the consequences! Could she have seen the sinister smile of the tempter, as she uttered the imprudent words, the same breath would have recalled them.

"I have been thinking, Mrs. Herbert," said her visitor, "that till you can find a better cicisbeo, you had better put up with me."

Isabel looked at him doubtfully; but there was such an air of frankness in his

manner, that her suspicions gradually vanished.

"When you have alarmed George a little," he continued, "taught him to feel that to retain the heart he has won a little more attention is necessary, we can confess our plot."

"That is true!" replied the deluded woman, charmed at the idea of bringing her husband, as she had done her lover, to her feet.

An hour afterwards, Mrs. Herbert, and Major Mottram left the cottage, for a stroll in Richmond Park. Guided by her resentment, she weakly permitted her companion to detain her till the hour of dinner: anticipating the mortification which her husband would manifest on her return—an idea which the major encouraged by every means. He was an accomplished man of the world, and knew how to offer that delicate flattery so acceptable to the female heart.

On their return, the servant presented a note to the gentleman. He read it, and appreciated both hurt and surprised.

"Has anything occurred?" anxiously inquired Isabel, who had recognized the handwriting.

"Nothing, I assure you—nothing!"

"It is from my husband?"

"Yes!" replied the major; "George merely writes to apologize for not dining at home. He has met a pleasant party at his club, and —"

"Club!" interrupted the indignant wife; "is there no message? Not one word for me?"

Mottram handed her the note. As soon as she had read it, the unhappy woman burst into tears, and let it fall from her hand.

One trace of Eden lingered in that weak heart yet.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

As Henry Ashton and his uncle approached the rectory, they encountered Chettleborough the sexton, and poor Martin. The countenance of the idiot brightened as our hero took him affectionately by the hand, and asked him how he felt. In fact, as Joe observed, it almost became intelligent.

"Back! come again!" said the victim of the warrener's brutality. "One! two! All will return with the sweet flowers and birds of spring!"

"Who will return, Martin?"

The poor old man made no reply to the question, but began counting with his fingers—"One! two!" and repeating the words "back again."

"What can he mean?" said Henry, anxiously.

Chettleborough was about to reply, but a look from Matthew Ashton restrained him. The worthy farmer was perfectly aware how necessary it was that the nerves of his nephew should not be unstrung, or his feelings agitated, by the perhaps groundless supposition that Ellen was at the ab-

bey. He had made up his mind not to tell him till after the operation.

"And how has my poor friend been?" demanded Henry of the sexton.

"E'en as you left him," said the old man; simple as a child; his chief amusement to gather daisies in the churchyard—for he generally accompanies me, and watches by my side whilst I work. At night he will listen for hours to my bells. Of late," he added, "I have observed a change in him."

"How a change!"

"He is more restless than usual, and once or twice has wandered from my cottage. The last time he did not return till morning. He had been, I suspect, to the abbey—for he raved respecting his old master, poor Sir William, and Miss Ellen."

By this time they had reached the rectory, where Dr. Orme, the Khan, Colonel Butler, Sir Jasper Pepper, General Bouchier, and the two medical men were already assembled in the library.

At the sight of so many strangers Martin drew back, with an expression of almost childish terror. It required all the influence of our hero and the sexton to prevent his escaping from the room.

Henry shuddered as he noticed the chair with the frame affixed to it. His tried friend Joe had already explained to him its use.

"Who is that man?" whispered Farmer Ashton, fixing his eyes upon the renegade—who betrayed, however, neither confusion nor the least sign of recognition at the marked gaze of the speaker.

His nephew explained.

Whilst doing so the Khan—whom their arrival had interrupted in a long explanation which he was giving of his invention, and the results he expected from it, to the medical men—renewed his conversation. At the first sound of his voice the farmer started, trembled, and turned very pale.

"What is the matter?" demanded our hero. "Are you ill?"

"Nothing—it is nothing, Harry!" answered the old man, faintly; "at least nothing that I can tell you now. Take no heed of me."

With a look of surprise his nephew left him—for at this moment Dr. Orme beckoned him to his side.

"Do you think," he said, "there will be any violence necessary to induce poor Martin to submit to the operation? In such case, my worthy friend Dalrymple declares that he cannot sanction the proceeding. The excitement might prove fatal."

"The best way to insure its success," replied our hero, "would be for all but Joe, the sexton and myself, to withdraw to the adjoining room: the presence of so many persons distracts the poor old man."

After a whispered consultation between the surgeons and the magistrates, the advice was taken.

"Be firm, Henry!" said the rector, as he wrung the hand of his adopted son. "I shall pray for success!" Turning to

the Khan—who maintained his usual cold and impassible manner—he added : “whatever may be the result, let not the pride of science induce you to prolong the sufferings of your patient after the hope of achieving a cure has disappeared.”

“The result is in the hands of God,” said the renegade ; “man is but an instrument in his hands !”

With these words he retired to a deep bay-window at the end of the room, and began to examine the instrument, which was upon a table under it.

No sooner were Joe, Henry, Martin, and the sexton alone, than the idiot—upon whose brain impressions and recollections were as evanescent as the rainbow—began to count upon his fingers :

“One! two! back with the flowers and birds!”

“He is quite calm now,” said the sexton. “Shall we place him in the chair?”

As unresisting as an infant in the arms of its nurse, the old man suffered himself to be seated. The only sign of fear or dissent which he exhibited was when Joe Beans attempted to remove his cap.

“No, no!” he muttered.

“You had better let me untie it,” whispered Chettleborough ; “he will not mind me.”

“Come, Martin!” he said, “it is time for bed.”

“Bells! bells!” exclaimed the idiot.

“What does he mean?” whispered Henry Ashton—who, as the moment drew near, repeatedly asked himself if he were justified in sanctioning an experiment which might possibly terminate fatally. The sexton made answer, that he was accustomed to play his charge every night to sleep with his hand-bells ; and, having observed that in the severest paroxysm of his suffering they appeared to soothe him, he had sent them up to the rectory, by the son of the clerk, at an early hour that very morning.

Martin still muttered something about bells ; but it was evident that the word had lost much of its force—that the idea it had excited became indistinct—for he almost immediately afterwards recommenced counting his fingers and deliberately pronouncing—“One! two!”

The bells, with the frame on which they were suspended, were brought into the library, and placed at as great a distance from the chair as the size of the room would permit. The eyes of the sufferer glistened with childish pleasure as the sexton began to strike upon them.

“Now, Joe!” said Henry Ashton, as soon as he saw that the attention of Martin was engaged ; “whatever we may feel for the pangs of our poor old friend, we must be firm. You will take his left hand, whilst I secure the right.”

“Oh, Master Harry!” observed the rustic, with a sigh ; “I would give the best year of my life that it wor over!”

The two young men each secured a hand of the patient, whilst Chettleborough com-

menced one of his favorite tunes upon the bells.

The idiot began to move his head from side to side, as if to beat time to the measure. The Khan advanced from the bay-window to the back of the chair, and began gently to turn the screws of the frame. So gradual was the operation, that the circle closed round the old man’s brow almost without his perceiving it, so absorbed was he in the music.

As soon as the head of the old man was secured in the necessary position, Henry Ashton looked up in the face of the operator. The courage of his sinking heart revived, as he gazed upon the calm, self-possessed, dignified countenance of the Khan. There was neither hope nor doubt in his eye, but that which at such a moment was invaluable—decision.

At the first movement of the circular saw—whose action was not only to cut through the injured portion of the skull, but at the same time grasp the fragments so as to prevent them pressing upon the brain—Martin started as if he had received an electric shock, trembled violently, uttered a deep groan, and then endeavored to raise his hands. Poor Joe in his agitation nearly released the one he held.

The sexton continued his tune upon the bells.

The Khan paused.

“One—two—bells!” said the old man, faintly.

The delay was but for an instant, to enable the operator to remove a few of the thin gray hairs which impeded the action of the instrument.

“In the name of humanity,” said our hero, “do not prolong his sufferings a single instant after you have lost all hope!”

“In the name of the God of justice and humanity,” replied the renegade, in a solemn tone, “I will proceed whilst one ray of hope remains!”

And once more he applied the instrument.

The shrieks and groans of the sufferer soon became heart-rending—but above them, loud and frequent as they were, Henry and Joe could distinguish the hissing of that terrible saw. They felt it in every nerve ; it thrilled through their veins like an electric current, jarred the very marrow of their bones ; the agony they endured was second only in its intensity to that of poor old Martin.

In his struggles to release his hands from the firm but friendly grasp which retained them, the patient dug his nails into their palms. Our hero felt sick at heart : he would have given worlds not to have been present, or that the operation were over. His companion was pale as death ; huge drops of cold perspiration ran trickling down his honest face.

Still the Khan remained unmoved. Calm as the iron statue of Destiny, he continued to ply the saw, whose delicate, sharp-cutting teeth were slowly eating through the shattered fragments of the skull.

Dr. Orme was a man of the greatest humanity; one of those gentle natures which could not endure to witness the sufferings of any living thing. At the first cry of the patient, he offered up a mental prayer; as his screams became louder and more violent, he grasped the arm of Surgeon Dalrymple.

"Stop this!" he said, "I cannot endure the thought of what his sufferings must be!"

The man of science, who held his stopwatch in his hand, looked at his professional brother to answer for him, and went on with his observation.

"Do not let the cries of the patient distress you!" said Doctor Martineau; "Dalrymple will tell you, as well as I, that he considers it a rather favorable symptom than otherwise."

Dalrymple nodded, as if to confirm the words of his *confrère*.

"Very shocking!" observed Sir Jasper Pepper, who was beginning to look very bilious. "Oh, that saw!"

They could hear it distinctly; for the sounds of the bells had ceased. The sexton's hand trembled so that he could no longer play them: it would not have been of much use if he could.

There was a succession of groans; then a deep-drawn sigh, followed by silence, which would have been unbroken, but for the hissing of the saw, which grated so upon the ears of the listeners.

Judging from the silence that the operation was concluded, the two surgeons entered the room. They were followed by the magistrates and the worthy rector.

They found the Khan in the act of replacing the cap upon the head of poor old Martin, who was insensible.

Dalrymple motioned to him to remove the cap.

"As I anticipated," he said; "you have succeeded perfectly in accomplishing the removal of the fractured parts, but the patient is dead from exhaustion!"

The renegade shook his head mournfully.

"Dead?" groaned Henry, with a sigh of disappointment. "Poor old man! fidelity like thine merited a better fate than this!"

Martineau—who had been feeling the wrist of the patient—suddenly asked for ammoniæ: he had discovered the faintest possible indication of a pulse.

"Quick!" he said; "he is not gone yet!"

The stimulant was instantly applied; the Khan at the same time taking care to replace the silver plate, to prevent any injurious effects from action of the atmosphere upon the exposed portion of the brain.

After a few moments of anxious suspense, Martin gave a gentle sigh. His head was immediately released from the frame; and Joe Beans, taking the old man up in his arms, as tenderly as a mother would her sleeping child, carried him into the adjoining room, and laid him upon the bed. It now became the turn of the regular practitioners to take him in their charge.

"If we can only succeed in keeping down the fever," observed one.

"In preventing his sinking," added the other, "there is a possibility that he may live—at least for some time."

"Thank God!" exclaimed our hero, when he heard the opinion; "it has relieved my heart of a fearful load!"

"And mine, too!" sobbed Joe, who had been vainly trying for some time to suppress a convulsive sort of hiccup. "Hang me, Master Harry! when I looked upon the old man's face, so pale and deathlike, and heard the whizz of that infernal saw, I almost felt as if I were helping to commit a murder!"

As the Khan, who had remained behind in the library, to gather up his instruments, was about to follow, a hand was laid upon his arm: he looked up—the hand was Farmer Ashton's.

"Not now, Matthew!" he said; "not now! I will come to the farm to-night—that is, if you promise me to be alone!"

"I do promise thee!" replied the uncle of our hero, in a tone of deep emotion. "Thee will not fail me? I long to learn—"

"You shall learn everything which I can or dare impart," interrupted the renegade; "remember this is no place for explanations such as ours!"

So saying he left the apartment.

"I am right!" muttered the farmer, as he followed him. "I knew that I could not be mistaken; besides, he called me Matthew: how should a stranger know my name?"

Although the operation had been so far successfully performed, the breath of life was all but extinct in the aged sufferer. Both the medical men expressed a doubt whether, in the event of his recovering his reason, he would sufficiently rally to make a deposition.

Dr. Orme observed that he felt inclined to sleep.

"You are right," said the Khan, whose confidence had never for an instant deserted him; "he is about to sleep!"

Henry walked up to him, and gratefully pressed his hand.

"From which sleep," continued the speaker, "he will either awake with reason and memory restored, or in a world where suffering and crime are unknown!"

"You, at least, will watch by him?"

"It would be useless, young man," said the renegade, placing his hand upon the shoulder of the speaker, who was no other than our hero. "I can no further serve him; added to which, an imperative duty calls me elsewhere. Doubt not," he added, "Whate'er betide, my wish to serve you—for I have not forgotten the scene with the warrener, in the grounds of Sir Jasper Pepper: if I live, we shall meet again!"

So saying, he quitted the rectory, but not alone: Joe Beans accompanied him, with the keys of the belfry—the temporary prison to which Will Sideler had been conveyed, to await the result of Martin's recovery.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

O woman in affection strong,
Weak only in joy's sunny hour;
More than to man to thee belong,
Endurance in misfortune's hour.

OLD SONG.

It is not to be supposed that Zara did not miss the weapon which Ellen had secured on the night when the inmates of the abbey were startled by the visit of the harmless maniac, who, like a restless spectre, haunted the abode of his former master; or that she was at a loss to guess the purpose for which her foster-child had taken it. Strange to relate, far from feeling alarmed, the ayah felt proud of her charge. She experienced emotions similar to those which the spectator feels who assists at the representation of some highly-wrought tragedy, or listens to the recital of some desperate achievement. With all her faults and treachery, the Indian could appreciate a great and heroic act.

"It was from this source," she murmured, "that the daughter of the pale face drew her resolution! She has less of her mother's blood than mine. I gave her the spirit which danger strengthens—hitherto I have considered her only as a child. Suffering, I find, has changed her into woman."

From that time her manner became so affectionate to the prisoner, that had not Ellen deemed it a deep-laid scheme to throw her off her guard, she would have welcomed it as the first dawning of a repentant spirit.

"It matters little which!" thought the persecuted girl; "I am mistress of my destiny! They may destroy me—but my enemies shall never make me false to the faith I have plighted—to the man who hath won my virgin heart! Better Henry should mourn me dead, than despise me living!"

On the arrival of Meeran Hafaz at Carrow, Lady Mowbray, who had neither forgotten nor forgiven the spirited interference of the ayah in behalf of Ellen, poured into his ear the poison of her doubts. She felt assured, she said, "that the Indian nurse meditated treachery."

At first the young man smiled incredulously.

"She has been bribed!" urged her ladyship.

"Bribed!" repeated Meeran: "you do not know the character of Zara! There is no sacrifice she would not make for those whom she loves! When she has once given her word, the wealth of Peru would fail to move her!"

"Bribed through her affections, then," continued the artful woman; "but bribed I am sure she has been! See her yourself, and judge if she is not changed! Ask the colonel——"

"I shall do better!" replied the youth, coolly.

"Better?"

"I shall inquire of herself!"

So saying, he traced a single word, in the sacred characters of the Hindoos, upon

a piece of paper, and requested her ladyship to send one of her servants with it to the ayah—who in a few moments made her appearance in the drawing-room. Her foster-son eyed her narrowly. There was something in her manner which instantly struck him: it was warm and affectionate, as usual, but a shade of sadness was mingled with it.

"Zara," he said, "you do not seem rejoiced to see me?"

"Not unless I see you happy!" was the reply; "it was an evil hour," she added, "which brought us to this cold, distant land, where hearts and faces are like painted sepulchres—masked and deceitful!"

At the allusion to painted sepulchres, Lady Mowbray blushed through her rouge, despite her effort to look as if she did not understand the allusion.

"I am not alone changed," continued the speaker; "although I have given you proofs of my fidelity—suppressed for your sake the yearning of my heart for the child I nurtured—you have listened to the tale of the slanderess and suspect me!"

"Zara!"

"Why, else," added the ayah, sternly, and at the same time casting a withered look of scorn towards her accuser, "is that woman present at our meeting? Do you class me with the vile thing whose service gold can purchase?"

"No, Zara!" exclaimed the young man, struck by her manner; "it is true that I trust but little to humanity—for the more I mingle with mankind, the more experience teaches me to despise it. I doubt myself, and all around me; but not you—not you!"

"What a very weak young man!" mentally observed her ladyship, who could not comprehend the existence of such feelings between the haughty, wealthy Meeran, and one whom she looked upon as a little better than a slave.

"You trust me still?" said the ayah, fixing upon him a penetrating glance, as if to read his secret thoughts.

"Still and ever!" he replied.

There was a pause, broken only by a deep sigh from his nurse: some terrible emotion seemed to agitate her bosom—but the struggle was a brief one, for her countenance speedily resumed its impassible expression; and, turning with an air of dignity towards Lady Mowbray, she requested to be left alone with her foster-son.

Boiling with rage and malice, the artful woman bounded out of the room. It seemed a relief to both when she was gone—for both despised her. For some time they gazed upon each other in silence, which Zara was the first to break.

"Meeran," she said, in the low, musical tone which she invariably used when speaking in the language of their native East, "I cannot dissemble with you. A change has come over me. I will no longer serve you in your designs against Ellen."

The young man bounded from the couch upon which he was sitting with the ferocity

of a tiger, his face flushed with passion, and then gradually assumed that pale olive hue which indicated the gathering tempest of his soul.

Zara regarded him unmoved—she had frequently witnessed such changes in his infancy, and was not to be terrified by them in his manhood.

"I have witnessed the sufferings of Ellen," she continued, "her sufferings and despair: she is dying, Meeran—the child I nurtured is dying through our cruelty! Act generously," she added; "achieve man's noblest conquest—the victory over his passions; resign her, and return to India!"

It would be impossible to describe the scorn and impotent rage with which her foster-son listened to the unwelcome words of the ayah—to whom his slightest caprice had hitherto been law, absolute as those of her own caste.

"Resign her!" he exclaimed; "not in the grave! From my funeral pyre my ashes would still claim her! I thought thou hadst known me better! my purpose is immovable—alike in love or hate! Is this your gratitude?" he added, bitterly.

"Gratitude!" she repeated, with a look of painful surprise; "gratitude for having watched over you with a mother's care—for having loved you with more than a mother's love—for having o'erleaped each human barrier—broken every human tie—to please you?"

"It was your duty!" retorted Meeran, sternly.

Zara smiled in bitterness.

"But it is well that I am warned—for with me to know my enemy is to be armed! Give up the key of Ellen's chamber!"

It was instantly thrown upon the table by the ayah, whose eyes flashed as terribly as his own. There was something fearful in the silent hostility of these two beings, who had hitherto been actuated as by one spirit.

"And now," said the young Indian, "hear my last commands: to-morrow night I expect the arrival of the priest who is to make Ellen mine—for mine, by force or her own consent, she shall be! I have sworn it by myself!"

"The only god you worship!" observed Zara, in a sarcastic tone.

Without deigning a reply, Meeran Hafaz took up the key and left the apartment, without casting a look upon his nurse, who remained for several minutes standing on the same spot, like a person who has received a sudden blow. Twice did the unhappy woman press her hand upon her side, and breathe the name of her foster-son.

"Ingrate!" she exclaimed at last, with a passionate burst of grief; "ingrate! was it for this I stifled the voice of nature in my breast, and lent myself to crime my soul abhorred—practised against the happiness of Ellen, who is as dear to me as if I had borne her? I am rightly served," she added. "My sin is made my punishment!

Meeran," she continued, "thou hast seen me strong in vice—shall I prove weak in virtue? How Zara has sinned thou knowest too well! How she can atone thou hast yet to learn!"

Twice during the day the ayah sought the chamber of Ellen, but found it locked. The second time she called to her.

"They have separated us!" she said, in a kinder tone; "but at night the eyes and arm of Zara shall watch over her charge!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

Now by my this day's hope, shadows to-night
Have struck more terror to the soul of Richard,
Than could the substance of ten thousand foes
Armed all in proof, led on by shallow Richmond.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE belfry of Carrow Church was a lofty, square tower, built entirely of stone and flint, in the florid Gothic style, and evidently of a much later date than the rest of the edifice, in which remains of the Saxon and early Norman architecture might still be traced. The belfry was divided into five storeys or chambers, accessible only by a very narrow flight of stairs, forming a part of the masonry of the north side of the tower, which was much thicker than the other three.

The upper chamber contained a small but not unmusical peal of bells; the second division was the clock-room: the third, to which no particular use was assigned, had been selected as the temporary prison of the warrener. To judge from appearances, it was not the first time it had been employed for such a purpose: the door being of massive oak, studded with iron bosses or nails, and secured by massive bolts on the outside. The window, with the exception of a small aperture to admit the light, was walled up—so that escape or communication with any one from below were equally impossible.

The groining of the arch which formed the ceiling sprang from four heads, one at each angle of the chamber. They had evidently been intended to represent the same number of saints, or worthies of the church. In the secluded situation in which they were placed, they were alike defended from the corrosive action of the atmosphere, and the fiery zeal of the iconoclasts of the Reformation—or, what is equally destructive, the mischievous propensities of the truant schoolboys of the present day. Their features were harsh, and sharp as when fresh from the chisel of the sculptor. A pallet and stool which had been placed in the room, formed the only furniture of the place.

At the earnest entreaty of the prisoner, who dreaded the long hours of darkness, the sexton had removed a large iron crescent from the ringers' chamber beneath. It cast a red, lurid glare round the dreary-looking chamber.

Will Sideler had passed a night of intense anxiety and terror. His feverish snatches of uneasy slumber were broken

by dreams, in which the past and present were strangely mingled. Voices whose tones had long been hushed in death, rang in his ears; and menacing eyes were fixed upon him. So strong was the delusion, that when he started from his pallet, he fancied more than once that the four heads in the angles of his chamber were gibing and scowling at him. There was a species of fascination in their gaze, which he could not shake off. His only resource was to hide his head under the clothes, and try to sleep once more.

Again the murderer dreamed. He saw himself wandering on the bank of a turbid stream, whose opposite shore was veiled in misty vapors. By an impulse he could not control, his feet seemed to be impelled towards a crazy old boat, in which a man was sitting. As he reached the spot, the ferryman extended his hand and pulled him in. In an instant the boat shot into the middle of the waters.

Then all was changed. The waters became red like blood—serpents with fiery tongues tried to dart at him from the foaming mists of the waves—the old boat turned to a coffin, and the features of the rower to those of the hangman, Mat Cowlis.

With a yell the prisoner awoke, and, for the first time for years, the name of his Maker escaped his polluted lips, coupled with a frantic adjuration for mercy.

An owl, whose ancestors from time immemorial had made their nest in the belfry of Carrow Church, answered the word with one of its melancholy hootings. It sounded to the excited imagination of the warren like the voice of a fiend mocking the tardy prayer of a too late repentance.

"I'll sleep no more!" he said, starting from his bed, and pacing the floor of the belfry; "my dreams are worse even than my waking thoughts! What do they mean?" he added, "by keeping me a prisoner here—here, so near to the vault of the Mowbrays—here, with no sound to break the horrid silence, save the dull ticking of the clock above, whose iron hands measure my sands of life? They wish to drive me mad!" he said, tearing his gray hair; "and once mad, I shall confess! Better that—better that—they can't hang a madman! Tick on—tick on, iron devil!" he continued, apostrophizing the clock: "I shall soon be mad—and then defy the hangman!"

Daybreak afforded to the miserable wretch no intermission from his torments. As the first ray of the glorious sun penetrated the aperture in his solitary chamber, it only served to impress him with the terrible conviction that he was one day nearer to his fate.

"I shouldn't so much mind it," he muttered, "if they would hang me anywhere but in Norwich! I have played when a child upon the Castle Hill, and should not like to be strung up there like a dog, with thousands of pale faces staring at me—people who knew me when a child!"

The thought that Mat Cowlis—whom he believed he had strangled on the night of

his escape from Newgate—could not get his grip upon his throat, afforded him some slight consolation. From the instant that he learned his real name and character, he had conceived a terror as well as disgust of that cynical old man.

He forgot that there were other executions in England besides Mat Cowlis.

When Joe Beans left the rectory, at the termination of the Khan's operation upon poor old Martin, he took the keys of the belfry with him, with the intention of conveying food to the prisoner. From the age of the sexton, he was afraid to trust him with the office of gaoler—so took it upon himself.

As the honest fellow, who was still very pale from the excitement he had undergone, crossed the narrow footpath through the meadows which led from the village to the church, he was startled by an old, familiar voice, calling out to him from the opposite side of the hedge:

"Holloa, Mister Beans! Beest that thee?"

He looked up, and to his astonishment recognized Red Ralph, the cowboy from Mortlake. The red-headed urchin was dressed in a new smock-frock, leathern inexpressibles, highlows, and leggings. He had even been guilty of the rare extravagance of having his hair cut: an operation which he never could see the use of, although he sometimes submitted to it for appearance sake; "for," as he used to observe, "the hair wor sure to grow agin!"

"Ralph!" he exclaimed.

"Ees it be I sure enough! But thee beant' glad to see I!"

"Indeed but I am!" replied Joe; "although I can't possibly imagine what caprice brings you into these parts!"

"It worn't no caprice!" said the boy, scratching his head; "it wor the waggon Stop a bit, and I'll tell 'ee all about it!"

So saying, he first threw his bundle and stick over the hedge, and then, taking a flying leap, bounded over it himself.

"The news!—the news!" said his friend, after he had shaken the boy by the hand.

"I'll tell 'ee!" said Ralph, with a grin. "All the people in Mortlake wor after I, to tell 'em all about the old house, and what had happened there! First, master—then missus—then the folks at the King's Arms! But I promised thee to say nought about t' old man and the rats—and I didn't!"

"That was right, Ralph!"

"Thee wor kind to me," continued the boy; "and tho' I might have swummed in yale, I wor mum!"

"Good!"

"Ay, good enough for missus and master, and the loikes of the folk at the King's arms! But Squire Coddle's wife sent for I! She be a mortal curious sort of lady, and so fat! Dick, the butcher, says he'll back her to weigh a score more than the parson's sow—and that wor the wonder of the parish!"

"And what did the Squire's wife say to

you?" demanded Joe, with a smile—for he perfectly recollects the coarse, masculine woman who used to drive about the village, not only to the risk of her own neck, but the terror of every mother who had young children in Mortlake.

"She said I wor a pretty boy!" answered the urchin, with a grin—"but I didn't believe her—and axed I if I should like to get into service, to look arter a pair of poles."

"Well?"

"I worn't a-goin' into her service!" continued Ralph. "The last lad she had, she all but broke his neck! When her blood is up, for the matter o' that, she don't mind who she pitches into! They do say she horsewhips the squire himself when he runs restive to her vagaries! Poor old man! he be awful henpecked for sartin!"

"But what has this to do with your journey to Norfolk?" demanded his friend, who began to grow somewhat tired of Red Ralph's prolixity.

"I'll tell 'ee: when she found she could get nothing out of I—and she axed a mint of questions—she fled in such a passion! her nose grew as red as her brandy-bottle—she ordered I out of the house, and swore she'd teach I to be impudent to one of the 'stocracy! I never knowed that wor her name afore!"

"Still you do not explain what brought you from Mortlake?"

"I be a coming to it," said the lad; "dang it, Master Joe! do give I time to tell 'ee! it wor all about a rabbit!"

"A rabbit?"

"Ees, I sold it to the tailor's wife, and Squire Shrimpey's wife made him swear I poached un. I thought wi' a good word from you I might get work down in these parts—so I gave constable the slip, and here I be!"

"Well, Ralph," said his friend, shaking him by the hand, "if it was not the bravest, it was perhaps the wisest step you could have taken! There is no fear of getting you work at Carrow."

"Thank 'ee!" said the boy.

"But how did you find me out?"

Ralph gave one of his merry grins.

"Will 'ee be angry if I tell 'ee?"

"Angry? No!"

"Well, then, I got it out of lawyer's boy. The fine chaps in the office refused to tell I—so I watched for un as he took the letters to post-office: and sure enough one wor directed for Mr. Joe Beans, Carrow, Norwich, Norfolk."

"I thought, Ralph," observed Joe, struck by his acuteness, "that you could not read?"

"More I can."

"How, then, did you contrive to make out the address?"

"Lawyer's boy could read," replied the urchin, with a knowing wink; "and that wor enough for I. But if so be thee beast ashamed of I," he added, with a serious look, "I won't stay to be a disgrace to 'ee! I have gotten three guineas in gowd

in my waistband, and can look further for work!"

His friend assured him that nothing could be further from his feelings than such a weakness, and that he would do anything in his power to prevent his regretting the change from his native village. If you are not tired," he added, "you shall walk with me: you once invited me to see your trap—I will show you mine!"

"What hast 'ee got un agin?"

Joe nodded.

"I should like to see un hanged!" exclaimed the boy, as his little, deep-set, ferret-like eyes sparkled spitefully at the recollection of his own narrow escape from the warrener; "I should like to see un hanged!"

In which very natural wish his companion assured him he was most likely to be gratified.

On mounting to the prison-chamber of the murderer, Joe found him crouched down in one corner of the room. Much as he disliked the man and his crimes, he could not avoid something like a sentiment of pity when he beheld his bloodshot eyes, pale features, and haggard look. It seemed as if the events of the last few days had added ten years to his age: his hair was evidently whiter, and his whole person meagre and wretched.

"I have brought you some food," said Joe, setting down the little basket he carried.

"I don't want food!" replied Will Sideler, sullenly; "it's drink that I require!"

His visitor observed that there was plenty of water in the cell.

"Water!" exclaimed the ruffian, passionately; "it's brandy I want! Would you give ice to a man with the ague, fire to the patient with a fever? Besides, I hate water—loathe it!"

"I am sorry I can procure you nothing else."

"Hang you and your sorrow too!" interrupted the old man, who began to recover something of his former tone; "I shall soon be sent back to Newgate, I suppose—I can get what I want there!"

"I don't think, Will Sideler," said Joe, seriously, "that you will ever see Newgate again."

"Where will they send me to, then?"

"Norwich Castle."

The warrener shuddered; his worst suspicions were confirmed: he felt assured that some clue had been discovered to the murder of Sir William Mowbray.

"They dare not keep me here!" he exclaimed with passionate energy; "I was committed to Newgate for an attempt upon old Elworthy's life! They can't hang me for that: an attempt—only an attempt! I must insist upon being sent back: I shall go mad if they keep me here!"

"Will," said the young man, seriously, "poor old Martin has recovered his senses!"

The intelligence produced an effect similar to that of a powerful electric shock upon

the prisoner. For an instant he stood as if suddenly transformed to stone ; then trembled violently in every limb, whilst the muscles of his iron visage became painfully agitated.

" My dream ! " he said. " I shall swing like a dog, where I played so often as a child ! I am struck down at last ! "

With frantic violence he threw himself upon the ground, a prey to the combined agonies of remorse and terror.

At this moment the door of the chamber was gently opened, and Red Ralph, who had been listening all the while at the top of the stairs, pushed in his rough, shaggy head.

" Joe's trap be worse than mine ! " he said. " Thee hadst better ha' given theeself comfortably up to the rats ! "

" Let us leave him," said the young man ; " a hand stronger than ours is upon him—he cannot escape its gripe ! "

" I hope it be the hangman's then ! " growled the boy, as his companion locked the door of the chamber. After which they left the belfry together.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Dark gathering clouds herald the coming storm.

HERMIONE.

COLONEL MOWBRAY began to feel heartily tired, though not ashamed of the part he was acting towards his niece. The death of his brother had placed him in such a position, with respect to his worldly circumstances that he had no longer the temptation of necessity to excuse his unprincipled conduct. Still he did not retract : two things restrained him : the first was the evil counsels of his wife ; the second, the confession of his infamy, which, to avoid exposure, he had signed at the dictation of Meeran Hafaz, and which the young Indian had promised to restore to him the instant the ceremony was completed which made him the husband of Ellen.

Her uncle had long since decided that he would have it *before* the marriage, or it should never take place with his consent. He was a cool, systematic man of the world, and had reasons for insisting on the point ; he had just been considering in his own mind how best to break this resolution to his guest, when the latter, still irritated and vexed from his interview with the ayah, entered the apartment.

" What is the matter ? " said the colonel, in his usually quiet tone ; " you seem vexed ? "

" No ! "

" Angry, then ? "

" Nor angry," replied the young man ; " although I confess I feel surprised—for I have found weakness where I expected only to encounter strength ; treachery, where I could have pledged my life I should only meet with fidelity ! "

The colonel shrugged his shoulders, and assured him that it was the way of the world.

" Of your world, possibly," observed Meeran ; " but not of mine ! "

" Ha ! I see ! " exclaimed his confederate, with a look of surprise ; " I see—you allude to the ayah : it is possible, after all, that Lady Mowbray was right ? I deemed her suspicions mere caprice or the ebullition of temper ; but no matter—here we are secure from interruption : the only man whose presence would be dangerous, is far from England ! "

" I trust so ! " exclaimed the young Indian, with a bitter smile ; " and yet it is strange I have not lately heard from Martingale ! "

" He did employ him, then ! " thought the colonel ; then, speaking aloud, he added : " I have procured the license, as you desired : to-morrow evening I expect the Reverend Mr. Twinetext. He is in full orders, and a person on whom we can rely."

" To-morrow, then," said Meeran, his countenance flushed with joy, " Ellen will be mine ! "

" To-morrow ! " repeated his friend.

There was a pause : each regarded the other for some moments in silence.

" Why the deuce don't you speak, Mowbray ? " demanded his friend—who saw at a glance that something was working in the mind of the colonel ; " you forgot I am not accustomed to your European diplomacy ! "

" It might take a lesson," observed the uncle of Ellen, " from that of the East ! In Europe it is but the undermining of the mole ; in India it resembles the gliding of the serpent. But enough of diplomacy—I will speak out, since you wish it. I am naturally frank in my proceedings ! "

The speaker's allusion to his frankness put Meeran Hefaz instantly upon his guard : on the same principle that the alarm made by the rattlesnake alarms the hunter.

" Well, then," said the young man, with a scornful smile, " what has your frankness to dictate or propose ? "

" I think you will admit," began the colonel, " that I have done every thing in my power to advance your success with my niece ? "

" I have nothing to complain of."

" In fact, that I have consented to measures which few uncles would agree to ? "

" Granted ! "

" Lady Mowbray's disinterested——"

" Pshaw ! " exclaimed the young man, interrupting him. " We will discuss one point at a time, if you please ! Her ladyship's disinterestedness and your candor are more than my poor logic can grapple with at once ! What is it that you require ? "

" A certain paper," replied his friend, perfectly unmoved by the covert sneer contained in his speech, " which you may remember you promised should be delivered up."

" Upon my marriage with Ellen ! " said Meeran, impatiently ; " together with a renunciation of her fortune. Both the partners are ready. You can peruse the last," he added, " and satisfy yourself that it is

binding—not a loophole for avarice or chicanery to creep out of. As for the first, I need not remind Colonel Mowbray of its contents, since—if my memory serves me rightly—he wrote every word himself!"

As he spoke, he drew from his pocket-book two papers, one of which he handed to his confederate, who—after perusing it with a business-like air—placed it in a desk, which he carefully locked.

"Is it satisfactory?" demanded the speaker.

"Perfectly!"

"Any thing more?"

"Only the second paper."

"When the compact is fulfilled!" exclaimed Meeran, haughtily. "Do you think I am a child, to be gulled out of the only security I hold for the fulfilment of your promise? Never! the instant Ellen is my wife, I pledge myself that the paper shall be yours!"

"It must be mine before!" said the colonel, in a tone of cool determination; "the possession of the second paper alone can render the first of any value to me: whilst you retain it, it enables you to compel me at any time to cancel the renunciation of my niece's fortune."

The young man started to his feet, and gazed upon him with an expression of mingled scorn and surprise.

"Is it possible," he said, "that you think me capable of such baseness?"

"I am a man of the world!" was the reply.

"True! of the *civilised* world!" retorted the Indian, bitterly; "and your wisdom been drawn from its worst school!"

"And where yours?" demanded his confederate.

"From nature! from the untamed passions of my soul! from my vices, if you will! But, bad as they are, they are virtues compared with yours! Were Ellen steeped to the very lips in poverty—as abject in the world's opinion as she is raised above it—my heart would but be knit the closer to her. I have sinned," he added; "but those who have felt like me alone can judge me! At least, I have had no mercenary motive."

A deep-drawn sigh startled both the speakers. Meeran instantly sprang to the door, which he threw wide open. He could see no one, and yet his eye commanded a view both of the hall and great staircase.

"Strange!" he muttered.

Colonel Mowbray looked very pale.

"Pshaw!" continued the young man; "it must have been our imagination or the wind which deceived us! It whistles through these old walls as through a broken tomb! Colonel!" he continued, seeing that his friend still appeared sullen and dissatisfied, "answer me one question, and the paper this instant shall be yours."

"Willingly!"

"Have you any other motive than the one you have alleged for desiring to obtain possession of it?"

"I swear by my honor, none!"

Although Meeran thought that he might have sworn a more appropriate oath, he made no further observation, but drew it once more from his pocket-book. The eyes of the colonel sparkled with cupidity.

"Once in your hands, you will perform all that you have promised!"

"To the very letter! How else can I secure my niece's fortune?"

"Take it!" said the young man, placing it in his hand. "I see I have misjudged you: the hold upon your avarice is as binding as the tie upon your honor!"

There was a knock at the library door.

"Come in!" exclaimed the young man, throwing himself upon a sofa.

The next instant Lady Mowbray entered the apartment. She came to announce the arrival of the valet who had been directed to accompany the warrener to Marseilles, and see him safely embarked for India. After the capture of his charge, he had nothing to do but take the next packet for England. Knowing the fiery temper of his master, he trembled to appear before him.

"You seem amazed, my love?" observed the colonel, who had just locked the second paper in his desk; "what has occurred?"

"An arrival," answered the lady.

"An arrival?" repeated both the gentlemen, with surprise—for they imagined their visit to Carrow unknown to every one.

"Victor," said her ladyship, "has returned."

At the name of his valet, Meeran Hafaz started from his recumbent position. There was something in the intelligence to alarm him—for he knew the fellow to be not only faithful to him, but unscrupulous—provided, of course, that he were well paid for his villainies—and he had paid him with more than Eastern liberality.

"Where is he?" he demanded.

"In the breakfast-room."

Without a word, the impetuous youth sprang past her to seek his baffled agent.

"Positively, my love," said her ladyship, "this Meeran grows insufferable! Thank heaven, once married, we shall be quit of him!"

A loud noise of mingled expostulations and curses was heard in the breakfast-room.

"For heaven's sake, go with me!" exclaimed the speaker, "or there will be murder done!"

After once more trying his desk, to satisfy himself that it was secure, he accompanied her from the library.

On entering the breakfast-room, they found Meeran Hafaz pacing the floor like a caged tiger, and the valet crouching in a corner where his master had dashed him.

"It was not my fault!" exclaimed the terrified wretch, as soon as he saw the colonel and Lady Mowbray; "indeed it was not—it was all Mr. Ashton's doing!"

"What has happened?"

"My rival has returned!" exclaimed the young Indian. "More—he encountered the warrener and this idiot, whom I trusted, at Calais, and contrived to get the former

on board the packet : that is what has happened!"

" Will Sideler, then, is in England?" observed the colonel, with an uneasy look.

" Ay!"

" And Henry Ashton?"

" With him!" continued Meeran. " Perhaps, after all, it is better as it is! I would not win my bride without a struggle! Ellen once mine, I can laugh at fate, and defy its malice! I lacked excitement," he added, " and this has given it me! The thick, damp air of Englad has chilled my blood, till it oozed, like stagnant water, through my veins—it comes freely now!"

His confederate did not think it better as it was. The return of our hero seriously alarmed him, and he secretly congratulated himself that he had secured the paper before the messenger of ill fortune had arrived.

" I must see Ellen!" said the young Indian.

" Now!"

" Now!" he repeated, firmly. " The sight of her will calm my brain and still its throbings: even in boyhood her voice could control my wayward humors! It must be this night!" he added, grasping Mowbray by the arm; " She must be mine to-night!"

" Impossible!" replied the colonel; " you forget that, although we have the license, Twinetext will not be at Carrow till to-morrow!"

" To-morrow!" uttered Meeran, with a sigh; " I shall never be able to endure this agony of the heart and brain till then!"

Without waiting for a reply, he left the breakfast-room, followed by his confederate: they directed their steps towards the chamber of the prisoner.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Eternal Hope! when yonder spheres sublime
Peal'd their first notes to sound the march of time,
Thy joyous youth began. But not to fade,
When all thy sister planets have decayed.
When wrapt in fire the worlds of ether glow,
And heaven's own thunders shake the world below,
Thou, undismayed, shalt o'er the ruin smile,
And light thy torch at Nature's funeral pile.

CAMPBELL.

WHAT a happy thing it is for humanity that, in youth and age alike, Hope is the last friend to desert us! The shipwrecked mariner clings to it as firmly as to the solitary plank which alone sustains him on the boisterous wave—the lost traveller in the desert believes that the next instant he shall hear its voice in the patient camel's bells—the neglected wife dreams of the return of her estranged husband's love—the anxious mother sees it in the hectic flush upon the cheek of her expiring child, mistaking it for the flush of health. Hope, like a pitying angel, smiles upon our cradle—cheers us through the rugged path of life—and, like a friend whose enduring fidelity no reverse can shake, descends with us to the grave.

From the altered manner of the ayah,

Ellen saw the struggle of remorse and affection in her heart, and it brought back to her own heart the long absent hope. She knew the courage and indomitable energy of her nurse, and doubted not that, if she once formed the resolution, she would find the means to save her. Had the contest been with lady Mowbray, or her unworthy uncle, alone she could have calmly awaited the result. All she doubted was, the counterbalance of Zara's devotion to her foster-s son.

The captive girl was pouring forth her soul in prayer when the ayah returned to her chamber. She observed with surprise that her looks were troubled; for the Indian woman was not one who wore her heart upon her face.

Zara carefully drew the night-bolt after she had closed the door. Approaching her foster-child, she took her hand, and, fixing her dark eyes upon her pale features, whispered, in her low, musical voice:

" Meeran has arrived."

A chill—a perceptible shudder—ran through the veins of Ellen.

" But fear not!" continued the woman; " I will save you!"

" Nurse! my own true, kind nurse!" exclaimed the captive, throwing herself into the arms of the ayah, and sobbing like a child upon her bosom; " I know you now! Oh! what a fearful time you have been changed to me! The past appears to me as a hideous dream. Often and often have I told Henry that, despite appearances, despite your love for —."

" Curse him!" interrupted Zara, firmly. " He has passed like an ill-omened shadow between the only beings that I love; but for him we might have all been happy—happy in India! I shall never see it more!" she added, with a sigh.

At the imprecation upon her lover, Ellen shrank from her, and regarded her with a doubtful expression.

" Forgive me!" continued her nurse; " it was but a momentary weakness. I recall the words—and that is something for a temper like mine! If I cannot bless, I ought not to curse the being that preserved your life—the man you love!"

" You will love him, too!" said her foster-child, once more twining her arms around her, and reposing her head upon her breast.

" Never! nev——"

The words were checked by the glance of Ellen, and the second " never" died upon the lips of the speaker.

" For my sake, Zara!"

" For your sake," replied the woman, " I will not hate him! Ellen," she said, " can you listen to words which will recall the life-blood to your heart—the light to your dimmed eyes—and yet betray no mark of joy—suffer no sign by which the curious eye of jealousy can guess that you possess the knowledge?"

" What mean you?" gasped, rather than uttered, the persecuted girl.

" Henry Ashton has returned!"

A cry like the broken murmur of a wounded dove broke from the lips of Ellen. The words of the ayah did indeed recall the life-blood to her heart—for it beat like a fluttered bird's against the bars of its prison.

"Is he well?" she faltered.

"Well," repeated Zara; "but you do not ask if he is faithful."

"I never doubted that," replied the orphan; "not even your lips could persuade me that Henry could prove unworthy of my love! But, Meeran," she added, and the joyous expression of her features changed to one of terror; "does Meeran know of his return?"

"He does."

"Then he will murder him!" she exclaimed, wringing her hands; "murder him, as he did my generous, noble uncle! warn him, guardian," she added, clinging to her nurse, "as you would guard the life of your poor child! the hand of his enemy fails not twice!"

"I will both warn and save him," replied the woman; "but if you would have him find you worthy of his love——"

"He will find me worthy," interrupted Ellen, "if he finds me living!"

"You must dissemble!" added the ayah.

"Dissemble!"

"To-morrow night," continued the nurse, "is fixed for your marriage—they have bribed one of their false priests to perform the ceremony. Meeran will soon be here—every instant I expect to hear his step on the stairs. He is mad, Ellen—mad with jealousy, disappointment, and unrequited love: you, who know his passionate nature—the fire which consumes him—can guess from the past of what he is capable!"

"He can only take my life!" said the orphan, firmly; "I can guard my honor!"

"By the sacrifice of life!" answered Zara; "think you I did not miss the weapon from my side, or was too dull to guess the purpose for which it had been taken? Temporize with him, Ellen. When they call upon you to descend to the library, comply—at the very moment of the sacrifice I will redeem you: it is your only hope!"

"My only hope!" repeated Ellen.

"At least," exclaimed the ayah, it is mine! you would not force me," she added, with increased agitation, "to shed the blood of him whom I nurtured, when a child, at my breast! Drive me not to it, lest at the moment my arm and courage fail me, and you are lost!"

At this moment the voice of Meeran Hafaz was heard in the picture-gallery, asking Colonel Mowbray for the key of the chamber. At the dreaded sound, Ellen clung to the ayah, beseeching her not to leave her.

"Follow my counsel," said Zara, "and you are safe; at all events, you are armed against dishonor."

So saying, she slid from her embrace, and crouched down behind the draperies of the toilette, but not till she had withdrawn the bolt.

"True," resumed the orphan, recalled by the words of her nurse to something like self-possession; "even the malice of Meeran cannot pursue me further than the grave!"

Seating herself as near as possible to the spot where the ayah was concealed, she awaited the visit of her persecutor, who entered the chamber directly afterwards, accompanied by Colonel Mowbray. Much as she loathed the sight of her worldly-minded and ungenerous uncle, his presence appeared a protection at that moment.

The countenance of the young Indian became comparatively calm, and his eye lost its fierce expression, as he gazed upon the features of his victim: he approached her with a subdued and almost gentle air.

"Ellen!" he said, "it is not thus that we should meet!"

"How else," replied the orphan, mournfully, "can the oppressed and the oppressor meet? Did you expect to see me, when my heart is crushed, with smiles upon my lips? Alas!" she added, with a sigh, "it is long, very long, Meeran, since your cruelty banished them!"

The colonel yawned, and took a chair; the conversation had taken rather too slow a turn for him.

"Ellen," said her former playmate, "do not drive me, by this studied, cold contempt, to despair—force me not to become a thing I loathe to contemplate! I love you—love you with the passionate idolatry of my nature! Your image possesses my soul so entirely, that it knows no other dream, no other hope! You loved me once!"

"As a brother, yes," meekly answered the orphan: "it is not my fault that you have changed the feeling to——"

"Hatred?" exclaimed Meeran, wildly; "do not, Ellen, for your own sake, say to hatred, lest you unchain the evil spirit in me! I have borne much—I can bear much from you—but not the avowal of your hate!"

"I pity more than hate you!"

"Bless you!" he continued—bless you for that word! Would I could induce you to recall the recollection of our youthful days—our childish love and confidence! With you, the impression was a transitory one; not so with me! Like the impress stamped by nature upon the hardened granite, you must destroy my being ere you efface it!"

"Would that my tears could soften it!" observed Ellen, mildly. "Oh, Hafaz! Why seek a love which never can be yours? Why blight the light of my existence? Would your heart feel happier because it had broken mine?"

"Ellen!" said the colonel, "it is time to end this folly! By nature, as well as the laws of England, I am your natural guardian!"

"I know it, uncle!" sighed the orphan.

"'Tis well you do!" he continued, coldly. "I have disposed of your hand to my friend here. The Chancellor sanctions the marriage; I command it! To-morrow night

you will be united, in the presence of Lady Mowbray and myself!"

She was about to pronounce a refusal; but there was an expression in the eye of Meenan which froze the words upon her lips.

"He will claim a joyless bride!" she said—"a very joyless one!"

"But still a bride," exclaimed the young man, sinking upon his knee, and clasping her cold hand in his. "Bless you, Ellen—bless you, even for such cold consent!"

"Consent!" she faltered. "Have I consented?"

"No matter, love, for words! A life of devotion shall woo the truant smile back to your cheek! I will be your slave, Ellen! anticipate each wish—guard you from every care! My mother, too—she whom you love—will welcome you as the preserver of her son!"

"Meenan—Meenan!" interrupted the agitated girl, "I cannot dissemble, or teach my tongue to lie! I cannot break the faith I have plighted to another! I know not what despair or madness may drive me to; but never will my heart pronounce the vow your cruelty would force my lips to utter!"

Terrified at the consequence of the avowal which the horror of deceit had wrung from her, she hid her face in her hands, and sobbed convulsively.

Meenan would have given the world to have dried those tears; but he felt that the only sacrifice by which he could have done so was beyond his resolution.

"She yields!" whispered the colonel with a sneer. "I told you how long her heroics would hold out!"

The youth felt as if he could have crushed her.

"Ellen," he continued, "there is not a tear from those sweet eyes which does not fall like a drop of molten lead upon my heart! A life of devotion shall atone them; and you will pardon, in after years, the violence of the passion which consumes me!"

The orphan remained silent.

"Say that you consent!" he continued, dropping his voice to a whisper. "If not in words, a look—a sign will be sufficient! No reply! Ellen, only promise that you will meet me in the library!"

"*That I can promise!*" said the maiden, rising slowly from her chair. "And now leave me, unless you wish to see me die with terror at your feet! I would be alone," she added; "alone with my own thoughts and heaven, to ask its consolation and pardon for the resolution I have taken!"

Meenan, who little suspected that the resolution the persecuted girl alluded to was self-destruction, rather than a broken vow to her lover or the risk of dishonor, naturally concluded that she alluded to the promise which he fancied he had obtained. He became almost frantic in his expressions of gratitude and delight; and, despite the scarcely repressed shudder of his victim,

pressed her hand repeatedly to his burning lips.

"Leave me!" she sobbed, "if you have any pity for the wreck you have made!"

His companion drew him reluctantly from the apartment. So transported was he at the imaginary prospect of calling Ellen his, that his usual judgment deserted him. He had deceived himself; the persecuted girl only permitted him to do so.

"By heavens!" said the colonel, "but you are more like a great boy than the cool, resolute fellow who once baffled me!" He alluded to the affair of the dice. "As impressionable as a love-sick girl!"

The young man silently shook him off. He longed to be alone, to commune with himself; the presence of the worthless instrument he had used was hateful to him.

"All's well that ends well!" continued the speaker, looking after him; "the consent of Ellen spares us both an unpleasant alternative!"

With these words, he directed his steps towards the library, with the intention of destroying the important paper which he had so lately obtained from Meenan. When he entered the apartment, the desk was gone. Overcome with surprise and consternation he sank into a chair.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Plain words bespeak plain deeds truth wears
no mask—
It sullies it.

CREON.

FARMER ASHTON awaited with considerable impatience the promised visit of the Khan; for, although he could not doubt that his motives in restoring old Martin—the only witness of the murder of Sir William Mowbray—to reason were good, still he wished to be assured upon the point. Independent of the strong interest he felt in the happiness of his nephew, he had another motive: he had recognized in the person of the renegade—changed as he was by time and absence—his long-lost brother.

It required no little tact on the part of the worthy farmer to baffle the curiosity of his wife, and explain that he must sit up to a later hour than was usual with him, and his reasons for being alone. Fortunately the good dame had no spark of jealousy in her composition.

As the hour drew near, Matthew left the house, and wandered up the lane which led to the common. He knew that his visitor must pass that way. He had not long to wait: just as he reached the middle of the lane, he heard a heavy, measured step approaching in an opposite direction.

It was the Khan. By a mutual impulse they grasped each other's hand, and pronounced the names, Philip and Matthew.

"You know me, then?" said the renegade.

"From the instant I heard your voice," replied the farmer. "I might have been deceived by your features—for faces change

with time, and my eyes are somewhat dim ; but my heart leaped at the sound of your voice—that could not deceive me!"

For some time they continued to walk side by side, in silence.

" Philip," said the farmer, " you have seen your son?"

" I have seen him," replied his long-absent brother, " and cannot sufficiently thank you for your kindness to the poor abandoned boy. You have done your duty by him, Matthew; not only generously, but wisely; more wisely, perhaps, than if you had known ——"

He suddenly stopped, as if he had uttered more than he intended.

" Known what?"

" Nothing—nothing!" said the Khan; " he is all," he added, with a sigh, " that a father's heart could wish!"

" You may say that, Philip!" answered the old man, proudly; for nothing was more pleasing to his ear than the praise of his adopted son; " though the merit is not altogether mine—Dr. Orme has been his tutor."

" I know—I know!"

" I hope thee dost not intend to take him from us, away to India!" continued his brother. " I have heard that thee beest rich, and may be ashamed of having a simple farmer for thee brother!"

" I am not rich!" coolly answered the Khan.

This was a great relief to the heart of the worthy uncle of our hero: not from a feeling of envy—on the contrary, he would have rejoiced at the prosperity of his brother—but that it lessened the distance between them.

" Thank God!" he muttered.

" That I am poor?"

" No, Philip,—not exactly for that; though riches do not make happiness! The farm has prospered with me. I have enough, and more than enough, for all of us; but were it less, I could share it with you?"

His brother silently grasped his hand.

" Do you think Harry has any suspicion," continued the old man, " that he is your son?"

" I am sure he has not," was the reply; " and for the present, for many reasons, do not wish him to be informed of it: that was my reason for appointing to meet you here alone!"

Matthew Ashton was puzzled: he could not understand how a parent possessed of such a son as his idol Harry could restrain the natural yearnings of his heart, and treat him as a stranger. An unpleasant suspicion, which made him tremble for the future happiness of our hero, caused him suddenly to stop short in his walk.

" Philip," he said, " I be not curious—but the love I bear the boy gives me a right to speak. I hope thee acted like an honest man to Harry's mother?"

" Like a coward and a villain to her!" groaned the renegade.

" God forgive thee, Philip—God forgive

thee!" uttered the farmer, with a groan. " I have often misdoubted it—for neither dame nor I ever heard of thee being married! So, after all, poor Harry is a ——"

" You misunderstand me!" interrupted his brother, impatiently. " Whatever my faults, I have not that sin to answer for: Henry was born in lawful marriage."

Never had the delighted Matthew felt a deeper glow of satisfaction than at this declaration of his brother. Satisfied on this one point, he inquired no further.

" I am glad thee beest come back!" he said, with a frank expression of contentment; " thee knowest the world better than I do: though I have been twice to London, and once as far as York!"

" Humanity," observed the Khan, " is much the same, whether in Europe or Asia, a great city or a village: circumstances modify, but rarely change it; its vices and virtues resemble each other closely."

" Likely—likely!" said the farmer, who did not feel perfectly assured that he understood his brother.

" But why at this particular juncture, Matthew?" inquired the Khan.

" I'll tell you," said the old man; " two or three days since, Chettleborough, the sexton, called upon me at the farm: thee must remember him—he wor a tall, gaunt-looking man, when we wor boys?"

" I recollect him perfectly," answered the renegade.

" He came to tell me that poor Martin, whom the rector had placed under his care, had several nights given him the slip, and, he had every reason to believe, made his way to the abbey."

" I see—I see!"

" But that wor not all: from his excited ravings on his return, he had further reason to suppose that poor Sir William's niece, Miss Ellen De Vere, was a prisoner, brought there for some infernal purpose."

His brother reflected for a moment.

" Matthew," he said, " have you named this to Harry?"

" No."

" Or any one else?"

" Not to a creature. Once I did think of trusting Joe Beans with it—but he is so fond of his young master, that, right or wrong, he would be sure to let the secret escape him."

" Everything depends upon the recovery of Martin," observed Philip Ashton.

" That may be a long time," said his brother; " and if poor Miss Ellen be really there, something ought to be done at once: Harry would never forgive me if anything should happen to the girl he loves; and I," added the old man, feelingly, " should never forgive myself! What had I better do? tell him, or ——"

" Not as you value his life!" interrupted the Khan; " his enemy combines with the strength of the tiger the subtlety of the serpent; he is bound by no law save his evil passions, and regards human life as a straw in his path, so little does he wreck of sacrificing it! Leave him to me!"

"To you, Philip?"

"Yes, I alone possess the means to disarm him. Rest assured of one thing—that I will watch over Ellen's safety, for her own—for Henry's sake!"

"Thee will want help, Philip?"

"Nor help nor witness, Matthew!" answered the renegade; "both would defeat my purpose! Like the mole, I must work in darkness, and alone!"

"It be queer work, that!" observed his brother, doubtfully; "I do not quite understand you; for my poor part, I have always thought that work of any kind, especially farming, was best done in the light of heaven; but thee knowest best!"

"Neither doubt my prudence nor my regard for your nephew!" said the renegade.

"Regard, Philip! that be a cold word, when speaking of thine own son! love would have been better!"

"Love be it, then!" replied his brother, impatiently; "by twelve in the morning you must be at the rectory!"

"What for?"

The magistrates will meet there to receive the declaration of Martin. His lips may name the assassin of his master—for he alone was present."

"But can he?"

"Assuredly!"

"Hast thee really restored the old man to his senses?" demanded the farmer; "Oh, Philip, Philip, thee hast won strange knowledge! When we wor boys together, thee wor as simple and ignorant as I am! How didst 'ee learn it all?"

"By suffering!" replied the Khan. "Farewell! I must to the abbey!"

"The doors are all barred!"

"I do not seek to enter it!"

"Windows closed!" urged the farmer, whose affection for his new-found brother trembled at the thought of his exposing himself to the revenge of the terrible enemy he had named.

"I have lived with the Indian and the savage," answered the renegade, "and can read a sign where others would only see a withered leaf or a broken flower. Trust to my prudence: remember," he added, impressively, "that for three days you have promised to keep from Henry Ashton the tie between us!"

"Three days did I promise? Well, I suppose I did. It will be a hard task, and still harder to keep it from my dame—but I must even try!"

"And now, farewell!" said his brother, shaking him warmly by the hand; "if I live, I will repay your kindness as a brother should do; if I fall, it will be in the performance of an act of duty, and my death will pay a heavier debt than thine!"

"Don't talk of dying, Philip!" exclaimed the farmer; "when thee hast a son like Henry and a brother to welcome thee! And as for debt, only prove a kind father to Harry, and all I have ever done for him and thee will be well repaid!"

Without answering, the Khan once more

pressed the honest hand which he retained in his grasp, and set forward on his way to the abbey.

"I cannot understand him!" sighed his brother. "I cannot understand him yet!"

CHAPTER XXXIX.

There is a judge from whose all-seeing eye
Man cannot hide himself. He needs
Nor witness nor confession—in secret
He prepares the punishment reserved
For crime—bursts on him in a thunder cloud,
And he is gone.

OLD PLAY.

No sooner had the Khan succeeded in performing the operation which was to restore old Martin to reason, than he left him to the care of the medical men, whose presence had in some degree sanctioned the hazardous experiment: under their care, the patient gradually recovered his memory. At first his recollections were confused and indistinct as some hideous dream which had oppressed his sleeping hours; but the second day they returned with terrible reality. The scene of the murder—the victim and his assassin—all were remembered; and a second time the reason of the faithful and attached domestic all but sank beneath the excitement they produced.

After a consultation with the surgeons, it was decided by Colonel Butler and the rector, that he should be questioned magisterially before them.

A note was accordingly dispatched to General Bonchier and Sir Jasper Pepper—who were both in the commission of the peace for the county—to attend.

The library at the rectory was accordingly arranged for the occasion. A table and seats were placed for the magistrates, and Dr. Orme's large easy chair for the witness.

Colonel Butler, who presided, opened the proceedings, by reminding his brother magistrates of the mysterious death of the late Sir William Mowbray, and added, "that evidence had been unexpectedly obtained, to bring the murderer to justice." The minutes of the coroner's inquest were then read, as well as the verdict of "Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown," returned by the jury.

At this stage of the proceedings Will Sideler was led into the room, in charge of Joe Beans, the sexton, and the village constable. The countenance of the ruffian was haggard—terror, remorse, and despair had ploughed deep furrows in his iron visage—his glance, usually so bold and fierce, was humble and subdued. He evidently felt like a man over whom tardy but sure-footed justice had visibly suspended her avenging glaive.

No sooner did Henry Ashton, who was standing close to the chair of the rector, behold the man by whose hand the thread of his benefactor's life had been so rudely sundered, than his countenance became suddenly flushed, and his eyes lit with a fire which betrayed the feelings of hate, disgust, and indignation which took possession

of his soul ; those of the warrener sank beneath his avenging glance.

" William Sideler," said the presiding magistrate, in a tone which fell like the sound of a death-bell upon the assassin's ear, " you are brought before us to answer the accusation of murder—cruel and deliberate murder—perpetrated upon the person of your late master, Sir William Mowbray. It is my duty to warn you that any statement you may choose to make will be taken down, and used as evidence upon your trial."

" I have nothing to state," answered the prisoner doggedly, " but that I am innocent! This is an idle accusation trumped up against me by a madman and my enemies!"

" Whom do you consider your enemies?" demanded General Bouchier.

" Joe Beans and that young man!" exclaimed the ruffian, pointing at the same time to our hero—who noticed the accusation only by a calm but bitter smile.

" And the madman?" inquired Sir Jasper.

" Martin the groom," replied the warrener ; " from boys we were enemies—we both loved the same girl. It was my quarrel with him which drove me from my service with—with —"

The ruffian hesitated, he could not bring himself to pronounce the name of Sir William Mowbray.

" Your victim," added Henry Ashton, for the first time breaking silence. " No wonder that his name falters on your tongue ; it was his image which haunted you upon the pier at Calais—it will stand beside you at the hour of death, and accuse you at the judgment-seat of heaven!"

The prisoner shuddered so visibly, that a similar feeling ran through the veins of the magistrates. The sensation was like to that which the sight of some loathsome reptile produces the first time that it meets our sight.

" You are well acquainted with Carrow Abbey?" observed Colonel Butler, resuming the examination.

" Yes."

" Are you aware of any secret passages or entrances to the house or apartments?"

" No."

" How came this gibbern, then?" exclaimed Dr. Orme—" which twenty witnesses can prove to have been yours—to be found in a vaulted chamber, at the end of a passage or recess opening from the library, the scene of the murder?"

Every eye was bent upon him ; twice the warrener essayed to speak, but the words died away upon his tongue.

" You cannot answer!" continued the speaker. " The letters it contains prove how long and foully you have conspired against the honor and happiness of the generous man whose bread you had eaten from childhood!"

" I know not how they came there!" said the accused, endeavoring to assume a firmness which his whole demeanor gave the lie

to ; " but it is my firm belief my enemies placed them there to blacken me!"

" Whom do you mean by your enemies?"

" Joe Beans and Henry Ashton," was the reply.

No sooner had the ruffian pronounced the name of Joe Beans, than the honest rustic, indignant at the villainy of such a charge, burst out in a passionate but unnecessary denial.

" It be a lie!" he exclaimed ; " a wicked, infernal lie—and will not serve thee, Will! Till the night I accompanied poor old Martin and the sexton, I wor never at abbey twice in my life—once when a boy and once since! Thee wor always a bad, revengeful man, but I never had concern or quarrel with thee! I would not raise my hand against a dog, unless he deserved it—much less a fellow-creature! Ask Chettleborough, your worship," he added ; " he will tell 'ee how we found the bag : it's my belief it wor the finger of God—not our poor wits!"

The deep earnestness with which these few and simple words were uttered, must have convinced his hearers—even if they had previously entertained any doubt upon the subject—that he had spoken nothing but truth. Henry smiled upon him, and his humble friend received that smile as the proof of his integrity and honor.

It was now agreed that the *witness* should be called into the room, to make his deposition. On Dr. Orme ringing the bell twice—the signal agreed upon—the door of the library opened, and Martin, supported on either side by the surgeons, made his appearance.

The countenance of the old man was ghastly pale from the sufferings he had undergone, but his eye was clear and intelligent ; whilst the compression of his thin parched lips, denoted alike reason and resolution. An idiot or insane person is rarely, if ever, seen with the lips firmly closed.

" Thank you, Master Harry—thank you!" he faltered, as our hero, with almost a woman's gentleness, assisted him to his seat—which he had no sooner taken, than he fixed his eyes upon the warrener, and never once removed them from his blanched countenance till the end of the examination.

In answer to an inquiry from Colonel Butler, both the medical men assured the magistrates that their patient had perfectly recovered the use of his reason, and was in a fit state to make a deposition.

There was something fearfully distinct in the deliberate and scarcely earthly tone in which the old man related all that had passed on the evening of the murder. His voice never once faltered, nor did his memory fail him. The words issued from his lips as from those of a corpse.

He began by relating the fright which Ellen had received in the picture-gallery, and his own determination to watch in consequence : which he did, night after night, in different parts of the abbey.

" I believe," said Colonel Butler, inter-

rupting him, "that the house at Carrow, like most old family mansions, contains many secret passages and recesses, which few are so well acquainted with as yourself?"

"None!" replied Martin, firmly; "except one man!"

"And his name?"

"Will Sideler. His father was an ancient servant of the Mowbrays, and showed him, when a boy, the entrances to most of them. But not all," he added, with a faint smile—"not all! Thank God, not all!"

This was doubtless an allusion to the recesses in which he had assisted his late master to conceal his will, together with the family jewels and title deeds of his large estates.

"Whom do you suspect to have been the person who frightened Miss De Vere in the picture-gallery?" inquired Sir Jasper Pepper.

"Will Sideler!"

"And what did you do in consequence?" added Colonel Butler.

"Watched, night after night," replied Martin, "as the old house-dog watches the house of those who feed and shelter him! It was all I could do to prove my fidelity," he added, with a sigh; "for I am old—very old!"

"And what took place on the night of the murder?"

Twice the aged domestic essayed to speak, but his feelings overcame him, and he raised his withered hand to his brow. Henry gently took it in his own, and pressed it kindly. The touch of human sympathy and love nerved the sufferer to proceed.

"I was walking in the picture-gallery," he continued, "from which there is a passage, known only to Will Sideler and myself, which communicates, beneath the great staircase, with the back of the library. The entrance in either apartment is concealed in the carved panelling, and opens with a secret spring."

"At what hour were you in the gallery?"

"It had just struck midnight."

"Were all the family at rest?"

"All but my dear, kind master!"

"Relate to us what followed."

"Whilst walking in the gallery," continued Martin, "I heard the peculiar click made by the sudden closing of the spring. I placed my ear to the panel, and fancied that I caught the echo of a retreating footstep. I waited for a few minutes, reflecting whether I had better follow, or at once alarm the household. Had I done the latter," he added, bitterly, "Sir William might have been living still!"

All felt for the poor fellow's regret—not that he had much to reproach himself with: few men placed in a similar position would have acted with the self-possession he had displayed. The prisoner, more than any one present, wished in his secret heart that the old man had alarmed the family.

"Perhaps," observed the rector, who had

noted the deadly pallor which overspread the features of the sufferer, and his repeated attempts to raise his trembling hand to his forehead, "we had better adjourn for half an hour."

The rest of the magistrates looked anxiously towards the medical men, as if to ask their opinion; but Martin decided for them.

"No!" he said, with recovered firmness. "I am ready—quite ready! I shall be better when I have done justice to my master's memory, and denounced his murderer!"

Again the warrener shuddered.

"I opened the panel," continued the speaker, "and carefully threaded my way along the passage: when I arrived at the vaulted chamber, between the gallery and the library, I heard a deep groan. Oh, how my heart echoed it! I rushed forward—the door at the end of the recess was closed—my hand trembled so I could not find the spring! I peeped through the crevices, and saw my master—my good, kind, suffering master—the poor man's friend—whom all who knew him loved and revered—seated in his chair—a man!—here the eyes of the speaker glared like those of an accusing spirit upon the prisoner, who was so fascinated by his gaze that he could not avert his own—"with his ruffian hand twined in his victim's hair—the knife reeking with Sir William's blood still in his grasp—I—O God! my brain went round and round!"

Overcome by his emotion, the faithful domestic sank, with a faint groan, back upon the pillows. At first all thought that he was dead, and the eyes of Will Sideler flashed with a sudden hope—for as yet the accuser had not named him.

"Monster!" exclaimed Henry, regarding him with an indignant look; think not to escape—dream not of it—the hand of the Deity has already traced thy punishment! Even if the victim of your brutality expires, heaven will raise a witness—for none may efface the judgment of the living God!"

Joe Beans, who was blubbering like a child, felt so indignant at the sight of his old friend's sufferings, and the triumphant look of the prisoner, that, as he afterwards confessed, he felt monstrously inclined to strangle him with his own hands.

It was some minutes before Martin gave the least sign of returning consciousness. By the use of ammonia and wine, which the surgeons had provided, he gradually recovered; but more than a quarter of an hour elapsed before the examination could be continued. Short as the time was, it seemed an age to all.

"A very interesting case, Sir Jasper!" whispered General Bouchier—to whose mind, palled and *blasé* with the artificial pleasures of the world, excitement was a novelty.

"Very!" replied the little East India director. "I remember nothing like it since Warren Hastings hung the rajah in India."

Here one of the surgeons observed to the magistrates, that he thought they might venture to proceed in the examination.

"When you first saw the murderer of Sir William," said Colonel Butler, "you say his back was turned towards you?"

"It was."

"Did you afterwards behold his face?"

"As distinctly as I now see yours!" replied the old man, mentally gathering strength for the completion of his narrative.

"And recognized it?"

"I knew him," continued the witness, "before I saw his features; for we had eaten the same master's bread for years together!"

"His name?"

There was a breathless silence in the room. All expected what the answer would be; but still they were anxious to hear it.

With an effort which none supposed him capable of making, Martin rose from his chair without the least assistance; and, deliberately raising his arm, pointed to the prisoner, and pronounced his name—"Will Sideler!"

The features of the murderer were bathed in a cold perspiration, and his coarse, iron-gray, matted locks rose and fell with terror. For some seconds the wretched man felt incapable of speech. The words rose in his throat; but a sensation like that of a hand tightly grasping it impeded their utterance. Every eye in the room was fixed upon him with a cold, glassy, stone-like glance; for the intense feeling of horror in the breasts of all was too profound to admit of expression. Like the head of Medusa, it had paralyzed them.

"It is a lie!" roared the warrener, with a desperate effort to break the spell which appeared to rest upon him. "I was not near the abbey!"

"Will Sideler!" repeated Martin, still pointing towards him.

"You are my enemy!" continued the warrener, hoarsely. "It was through you that I lost my place in Sir William's family, as keeper! Through you that men looked coldly upon me! You have hated and persecuted me for years! My judges will not believe you! You are mad—perjured! You murdered him yourself, perhaps, to cast the blame on me!"

To the last monstrous accusation, old Martin replied only by a contemptuous smile. For the third time he pronounced the name of "Will Sideler," and slowly sank back in his seat.

No one present doubted for an instant that the old man had spoken truth. God had not restored him to reason merely to utter a lie.

"Do you feel sufficiently strong," inquired the rector, "to relate what followed the murder?"

"I forced open the door," replied the witness. "I know not how—but I did force it. Although too late to save my noble master, I hoped at least to avenge him! There was a struggle! I felt his

assassin's breath upon my face! I—I can't recollect anything further. I suppose I must have received some hurt!"

"Have you any recollection how long it is since this occurred?"

"No. They tell me it is weeks since," replied the witness. "I thought it only two or three days."

"Nor where you have been?"

"Here, at the rectory!" answered Martin, with a look of surprise. "Where should I have been?"

It was evident, from these replies, that the interval between the murder and the recovery of his reason had left a perfect blank upon the old man's mind. He was as unconscious of his madness as of his residence with the sexton.

Mrs. Jarmy and the servants who first discovered the bodies of Sir William and his faithful servitor, were next examined. They deposed to the condition in which they found the latter, as well as their astonishment at discovering no trace of the means by which the assassin had escaped—which first gave rise to the supposition that the death of the baronet was the result of suicide.

After a whispered consultation between the magistrates, Colonel Butler asked the warrener if he had any statement to make. He replied by a sullen negative.

"Prisoner," resumed the colonel, "it is the decision of the bench that you stand fully committed to Norwich Castle for the murder of your late master, Sir William Mowbray."

"I won't go there!" exclaimed the ruffian, furiously; "you have no right to send me there! It is a trumped-up scheme against me, to swear away my life! Send me back to Newgate! I escaped only a few days since! I tell you," he added, frantically, "that I will go back to Newgate!"

It was explained to him that the present charge was so much more serious than the one brought by Lawyer Elworthy against him, that his request could not be complied with.

"Bail me, then!" continued the warrener. "I can find bail! I have friends—rich friends—who will see me righted! I can procure bail for a thousand pounds!"

Sir Jasper Pepper, who hitherto had taken no active part in the proceedings, was about to explain to the prisoner that murder was not a bailable offence, when Dr. Orme, in whose ear Henry Ashton had hastily whispered a few words, interrupted him, by demanding the name of the party whom the accused proposed as his bail for appearing upon his trial.

"He is rich!" eagerly answered the ruffian—catching, as drowning men catch at straws, at the hope—"rich enough to buy you all!"

There was a look of surprise upon every countenance present, except our hero's and the rector's.

"His name?" inquired Colonel Butler, blandly.

"The rich Indian gentleman, Meeran Hafaz?"

A sigh of deep and painful satisfaction broke from the bosom of Henry Ashton : his doubts were confirmed.

"He won't bail thee!" whispered Joe to the prisoner ; "he be like the devil, who first leads men into sin, then leaves them in the lurch!"

It was explained to Sideler that this was not a case in which bail—no matter what the amount—could be taken.

"And you are determined to send me to Norwich Castle?" said the accused.

"Of course!"

"Then I won't go alone!" exclaimed the assassin, in a determined tone. "If I must hang, I'll hang in company : there be a greater villain than I am in the job!"

"His name?"

"Meeran Hafaz! I wor poor, and he tempted me with his cursed gold—sent for me to Sir Jasper's, and talked to me about Sir William!"

"You confess, then, that you murdered him," eagerly demanded Henry, "at the instigation of this Meeran?"

"No—no!" replied the wretch—for all his cunning had not quite deserted him—"I won't say that; but this I will say, that the Indian gentleman told me to do so. I refused—of course I refused : so most likely he employed some one else; that old rogue, perhaps," he added, pointing at the same time to Martin, "as likely as any other!"

An incredulous smile was the only notice taken by the magistrates of the preposterous supposition.

When General Bouchier and Sir Jasper Pepper first heard the name of Meeran, they exchanged glances of surprise merely ; but when the warrener proceeded to relate how he had tempted him to commit the crime which he stood charged with, each felt the propriety of standing forth as his defender. The general had introduced him into society, and stood pledged, as it were, to his character ; the director had received him as his guest. Each felt himself, therefore, unpleasantly compromised.

"This charge, gentlemen," said the former, "is so ridiculous—so evidently the result of malice—that I should apologize for noticing it, were not Meeran Hafaz my friend : that is to say," he added, correcting himself, "recommended to me by friends in whom I can place the most unbounded reliance. In India his rank is princely."

There was a silence. No one echoed the convictions of the speaker.

"His fortune colossal!" added the director.

"Ay, ay!" interrupted Will Sideler with a sneer ; "he be rich enough!"

"A person so respectable!" continued the first speaker.

"So extremely wealthy!" chimed in Sir Jasper.

"What motive?"

"What motive!" exclaimed Joe Beans,

unable any longer to control his indignation. "I'll tell 'ee, gentlemen, what motive! He loves Miss Ellen, who doesn't love him. He and Colonel Mowbray carried her off to Cromwell House, and kept her a prisoner. It's my belief he wouldn't stick at murder, or worse—if anything can be worse—to gain his purpose! Would I had shot un?" he muttered in an undertone to himself ; "would I had shot un!"

The general and Sir Jasper Pepper seated themselves with a dissatisfied air : the few simple words of the honest rustic had cast a new light upon the motives of the young Indian.

"Devilish unpleasant!" whispered the soldier to his friend : who replied only by an expressive shrug of the shoulders.

The depositions of Martin and the servants were read over, and signed by them in the presence of the accused, whom Colonel Butler directed to be instantly conveyed, upon a warrant from the bench, to Norwich Castle. No sooner had the order been given, than the door of the library opened, and Mayes and Kemp, two well-known officers of police, who had been all the time in waiting, made their appearance. With a dexterity which long practice alone could insure, they approached the warrener, and, before he could offer the least resistance, or even seemed aware of their intention, clapped a pair of handcuffs upon his wrists.

"Come!" said Kemp, placing his hand upon the ruffian's collar, "the gig is at the door!"

"I won't go!" gasped, rather than uttered, the wretched man. "I have confessed nothing—done nothing! I am innocent, I tell you—innocent!"

"We know all that!" coolly replied the officers—who, without further ceremony, dragged him from the room.

The curses and protestations of the murderer were heard by those who remained in the library till the vehicle had driven away—when he suddenly became silent, and sank into a state of sullen despair ; the only request he ventured to make to his conductors was, that they would not drive him through the village. He dreaded to meet the curious and reproachful looks of those who had once been his friends and companions.

As soon as Martin had been removed once more to his chamber, Colonel Butler proposed to his brother magistrates that they should issue a second warrant for the apprehension of Meeran Hafaz—a step which the general and Sir Jasper stoutly opposed. The opinions were evenly balanced on either side, when Henry Ashton requested to be heard.

"I believe, young gentleman," observed the East India director, with a sneer, "that you are not yet in the commission of the peace?"

"True, Sir Jasper!" replied our hero ; "but I am a witness."

The little man sat down with a look of disappointment. He had failed to brow-

beat one whom he had looked upon as a mere *parvenu* in fortune—a defect which, in his judgment, exceeded even the want of birth.

The youth related as briefly as possible his adventures in Italy ; suppressing only that portion of them which related to the unhappy Lady Mowbray. His hearers listened with horror to his account of the death of Walter, and the discovery of the villainy of Martingale ; but when he produced the confession of the unprincipled agent of his rival, the feeling was changed to indignation ; not a word was uttered in opposition to the issuing of the warrant for the apprehension of Meeran.

"Decidedly," said the general to his companion, "this Hafaz has proved himself an infernal fool ! What want of tact ! Decidedly unpleasant to have a fellow hanged, whom one introduced to society—in fact, made a sort of lion of ! Though, perhaps, after all," he added, "the *contretemps* may increase his popularity!"

"Only to think that I should have invited him to Bungalow Hall !" groaned Sir Jasper. "I shall never hear the last of it ! If I had my choice, I had ten times rather my acceptance had been protested upon 'Change. But do you think that he is really guilty ?"

General Bouchier looked at him with an air of assumed surprise ; and, to avoid giving a direct answer, pointed to some distant object from the carriage window. He wondered at his obtuseness.

CHAPTER XL.

I cannot rest. This fever of the blood
Consumes me. Inaction gnaws my heart-strings.
OLD PLAT.

HENRY ASHTON's first care, after the departure of the magistrates, was to visit the chamber of poor old Martin. A weight was removed from his mind—the assassin of his revered benefactor at last was in the iron grasp of justice—and the disclosure which the villain had partially made raised an insurmountable barrier between his rival and Ellen. Still he was unhappy. A hundred times he demanded of himself what was her fate.

Mrs. Jarmy met him at the door of the apartment. The good old lady had been severely affected by the shock of Sir William's death, which the scene of the morning recalled with all its horrors.

"You cannot see Martin now," she said, placing her finger upon her lips to impose silence ; "he sleeps."

"How has he borne it ?"

"Well," she replied ; "the surgeons are of opinion that he will rally, for some months at least. Only to think," she added, "that Will Sideler—whose father and grandfather both ate the bread of the Mowbrays—should have—have—" Sobs choked her utterance. She could not bring her lips to utter the fearful word. "I never thought him so bad as that!" she con-

tinued, after she had partially recovered her self-possession. "Miss Ellen, too!"

"I will seek her, Jarmy, through the world!" exclaimed the young man. "I have been tied here in consuming inactivity by the strong bonds of duty. To-morrow I depart for London, to demand an account of his niece at the hands of her Colonel Mowbray."

He felt that it would have been an insult to the memory of the dead to style the heartless, scheming man of the world by the name which Ellen most revered—"uncle."

Sorrow had lessened many of the worthy housekeeper's prejudices. She no longer looked with distaste upon the possibility of the nephew of farmer Ashton becoming the husband of her young lady. The man who had avenged the death of Sir William merited everything.

"God speed you!" said she, leading him still further away from the door of the sick man's chamber ; "and bring you and Miss Ellen safe to Carrow again ! I shall never rest till I see her dear, sweet face again!"

She hesitated—our hero distinctly saw that there was something upon her mind she wished to give utterance to. Taking her hand, he asked her if she doubted him.

"It is not that, Master Henry!" replied the old lady ; "it is not that ! He that was wiser and better than us all, both trusted and loved you ! It is that I do not like to speak a disparaging word of any one who shares the blood of the Mowbrays."

"What mean you?" demanded our hero.

"Do not trust the colonel!" whispered the housekeeper, impressively ; "he never loved his brother. He will speak you fairly to your face, whilst he meditates the blackest treachery in his heart. He is a bold, bad man, and has much to answer for. If he speaks you fairly, doubt him ; if kindly," she added, "look to your safety!" God help the innocent victim so blindly intrusted to his hands.

It was no slight mark of the old lady's confidence and regard, her speaking thus freely of one whom she considered the head of the house she had so long and faithfully served.

"Trust to me!" exclaimed our hero, after thanking her for the caution she had given him ; "the love and gratitude I bear the memory of his son will not blind me to the duplicity of the father ; he will find me no easy dupe!"

So saying, he descended to the garden, to inform Dr. Orme of his intended departure. The worthy rector had too lately recovered his adopted son, to contemplate a second separation without uneasiness. He urged him to remain, assuring him that Lawyer Elworthy would be a much more likely person to ferret out his rival, and deliver him into the hands of justice, than he could possibly prove himself.

"Father! friend!" exclaimed his former pupil ; "for you have permitted me to call you by those loved, familiar names—do not blame me, but my resolution is taken.

There is a gnawing viper at my heart which will not rest ; a dream which haunts my troubled sleep ! Ellen in the power of Meenan Hafaz ! I must seek her ! Action may end in disappointment, but if I remain idly here I shall go mad—mad ! My heart is almost broken !”

“ Seek her, then, my son !” replied the old man ; “ and heaven direct your search !”

“ It has directed it !” exclaimed a deep, calm voice, so near to them, that both the rector and Henry, when they turned and beheld the Khan and farmer Ashton, wondered how they had approached them unperceived.

“ What mean you ?” demanded the lover of Ellen.

“ That you must remain at Carrow.”

“ Must !”

“ If you wish to find her whom you seek ?”

“ Explain yourself, mysterious man !” exclaimed our hero ; “ hitherto you have spoken only in obscure phrases, and yet I believe your purpose is a friendly one !”

“ At least towards you !” answered the renegade with a sigh. “ I have proved it at the cost of many a bitter struggle ! But, enough of this : you seek the niece of the late Sir William Mowbray ?”

“ Yes !”

“ And would give much to discover her abode ?”

“ My life—my life !” eagerly answered the young man.

“ It needs not so costly a sacrifice,” replied the Khan ; “ merely that of your purpose and impatience for a few hours ! You gaze upon me,” he added, “ as if you think I could deceive you !”

When Henry remembered how lately he had trusted and been deceived, he wondered at the half-formed inclination which he felt, difficult as the task would be, to repress his impatience, and accede to the request.

“ Thee mayst believe him, Harry !” said Farmer Ashton, grasping his nephew’s hand ; “ *he will not deceive thee !*”

“ You know him, then ?”

“ Yes !”

The suspicion which Henry had formerly entertained that the mysterious stranger was his father, once more returned : and yet he felt no yearning of the heart, none of those strong but unaccountable impulses which draw the parent and the child together.

He looked alternately from the farmer to his companion : there was not the least resemblance, either in voice, form, or feature, to induce him to believe that they were brothers—and he felt relieved by the observation.

“ And can you, too,” said our hero, appealing to his uncle ; “ can you torture me by this suspense ?”

“ It be for thy good, Harry—for thy good ! and can only last for a few hours. Be patient !” continued the old man.

“ Till when ?”

“ Till darkness has settled upon the face of nature,” replied the renegade, answering for him. “ I am tied by circumstances,

which at times are as imperative as necessity.”

“ Be it so !” replied the lover, strongly tempted by the hope of so soon beholding his adored Ellen. “ Should you deceive me, God forgive you for your cruelty !”

“ He will not deceive thee !” repeated Farmer Ashton. “ Think you I would trust your happiness, and my own, which hangs on it, to any but — ?”

He paused—a glance from the Khan had checked him.

“ Whom ?” demanded Dr. Orme.

“ One whom I feel well assured will not betray the trust !” answered the old man, firmly.

The rector invited the new-comers into the house. He felt naturally anxious to fathom, if possible, the motive of the man who certainly had, on more than one occasion, proved the friend of his adopted son. Whatever his opinion of him, he could not doubt the sincerity of the farmer.

“ Be it so !” said the renegade ; “ I had a task to perform, but you can probably arrange it better. You must procure the assistance of ten or a dozen men, upon whose courage, as well as fidelity, every reliance may be placed.”

“ For what purpose ?” inquired Henry Ashton, eagerly.

“ That you shall know in time. I have no half confidence to give—with me it is all or none !”

It was finally arranged that Joe Beans should be sent to the farm and village to collect a party such as the speaker had suggested, and bring them, by seven in the evening, to the rectory.

“ A dozen !” exclaimed the faithful Joe ; “ a hundred, if you want them ! I have only to say that Harry Ashton requires their services, and there are not three lads in all Carrow that would lag behind ! Be I to bring them direct to parson’s ?”

“ Direct !” replied the Khan, “ and in silence !”

Joe assured him that he would break the head of the first man that uttered a word ; and, proud of the commission, as he would have been of any office that could serve his friend, started at once upon his errand, whilst the rest of the rector’s visitors retired to the house.

Our hero would willingly have accompanied him, but he yielded to the remonstrances of his uncle and Dr. Orme, backed by the strong desire he felt to know more of the character of the Khan and his motives—which, up to the present, appeared to him inexplicable.

Love works a strange metamorphosis in the habits, as well as the heart of man. Till he knew Ellen, Henry Ashton had never been known to abandon either his will or his design.

CHAPTER XLI.

Then marvelled he much, that a man of pride Like a book-learned priest should ride. SCOTT.

As Joe Beans passed the lodge at the en-

trance to the rectory, his reveries and speculations as to the motives of the errand he was dispatched upon, were broken by the voice of Red Ralph—who, seated upon a style on the opposite side of the road, had evidently been waiting for him.

"Master Beans," said the urchin, "beest that thee?"

"Can't you see it is?"

"I be almost a tired o' stoppin'."

"And what are you stopping for?" demanded the young man, who felt at first anxious to get rid of the boy, although a little consideration induced him to change his purpose—for he recollects that if any enterprise were on foot, he could scarcely have a more efficient ally than Ralph.

"Why, to see and talk to 'ee a bit!" answered the lad, with a grin: "so thee ha' sent t' old man to gaol?"

Joe nodded in the affirmative.

"And will they hang un?"

"Most likely."

"I be mortal glad of that!" observed Ralph, who continued to walk by the side of his patron—for such Joe Beans must be considered. "He wanted to kill I at Mortlake—now," he added with a grin, "I shall see un dangle like a varmint from the gallows, as I told un: that be better than the rats!"

His companion shuddered, although he scarcely wondered at the resentful feelings of the poor ignorant speaker, who had never known kindlier nurture than the parish house, and whose mind was even more uncultivated than his looks.

Ralph was evidently in high glee. He had seen the warrener driven down the lane towards the city by the police-officers; and followed the gig, running by the side, and jeering the prisoner, till a well-directed cut from the driver's whip taught him to keep at a more respectful distance.

"He looked mortal down!" he added, after relating to his companion the above circumstance. "They do say he has committed murder!"

"Who could have told you that?" inquired Joe.

"Oh, it be murder!" said the lad, regarding him with a half-laughing, cunning expression. "I thought it wor!"

His patron felt half inclined to be angry at the ruse by which the urchin had drawn from him the admission; and Ralph, with his usual discretion, kept, for the next ten minutes, beyond the reach of his hand.

"I suppose," he said, musingly, "that farmer will gi' I a holidy to go and see the old man hanged! I never did see one! Did thee, Mr. Beans?"

"No! And now, Ralph, don't speak of it again. The fellow may deserve his fate; and though I sometimes feel that I could strangle the ruffian with my own hands, or dash his wicked brains out, I should not like to see him turned off like a dog upon a gibbet!"

"Not!" repeated the boy, with surprise. Well, that be mortal curious! Now, I should!"

By this time they had reached the common; upon whose broken sward the lengthened shadows of here and there a solitary tree indicated that day was drawing to a close.

"What be that?" demanded Red Ralph, pointing to a carriage which had been overturned close to the chalkpits, where Henry Ashton had formerly preserved the life of Ellen. "There be a mishap o' some sort!"

Both hastened their steps, to see if they could render any assistance. On reaching the spot, the carriage proved to be one of the chaises from the Angel; and the inmate, rather a venerable-looking man, was struggling to extricate himself.

Joe and his companion assisted the driver to turn over the body of the vehicle, and set the gentleman at liberty: who no sooner found himself safe on terra firma, than he commenced a volley of abuse against both road and postillion; swearing that the first was only fit for a dray to pass over, and the second to drive it.

No sooner did Red Ralph hear the sound of the speaker's voice, than he opened his immense jaws, threw back his head, and indulged in one of his terrific grins, much to the annoyance of his companion, who thought that the urchin's mirth proceeded from his natural love for mischief. But he was mistaken. The lad and the gentleman in the post-chaise were old acquaintances, but not friends. In fact, "Remnant's cowboy," as he was generally called when at Mortlake, was friendly with very few.

"Are you hurt, sir?" inquired Joe.

"No bones broken, I believe; but infernally shaken! How far is it to Carrow Abbey?"

"To where?" demanded the young man, with surprise.

"To Carrow Abbey."

"About two miles."

"That is fortunate!" remarked the gentleman. "I can walk there!"

"Walk there!" repeated the rustic.

"Why, it is uninhabited!"

"Ah, yes; I have heard so. No matter! It is rather a curious old place, I believe?"

"Very curious, sir!"

"No objection, I suppose, to a gentleman who is travelling for pleasure seeing it?"

"I never heard of any," replied Joe Beans, who was very far from feeling assured that curiosity was the only motive which had brought the querist, at the close of a dull October day, to inquire about the ancient mansion of the Mowbrays. .

The stranger drew forth his purse and proffered a crown to Joe Beans, as a trifling recompence for the service he had rendered him. The young man civilly but firmly declined it.

"I'll take it, parson!" exclaimed Red Ralph, with a broad grin. "I see'd 'ee first, and bean't above it!"

With a look of surprise and annoyance at the unexpected recognition, the gentleman placed the money in his hand.

"Egad!" continued the boy, looking first at the coin and then at the donor;

thee beest in luck! Few, I reckon, see the colour o' thy brass! It be a good un, bean't it?" he added, thrusting the crown-piece between his teeth, to try if it would bend.

Without condescending to reply, the traveller, with an air of mortification which he could not conceal, walked away, taking the direction towards the abbey. A small carpetbag which he carried in his hand was the only luggage in the chaise.

The adventure puzzled our honest friend exceedingly: he felt assured that something more than curiosity brought the stranger to Carrow, and he hesitated whether to follow him or not.

"When did the gentleman arrive?" he demanded of the postillion, who was busily occupied in attempting to repair the broken wheels of his chaise.

"By the telegraph—about an hour ago," was the reply.

"Did any one meet him at the office?"

"No; the moment he got off the coach he ordered a chaise for the abbey," said the lad; "ordered me to take the nearest way, and drive as if the devil or a bailiff were after him."

"That be parson, all over!" observed Ralph. "He can smell a bailiff as readily as old Snap a rat! And so he ought—he had enough of such varmint arter him when he lived at Mortlake!"

Joe bade the postillion good-bye, promising to send him a wheelwright to assist him in putting the chaise in a fit state to be taken back to Norwich. Instead of pursuing his way, as he at first intended, to the village, he retraced his steps, and walked towards the park.

"That bean't the way," observed his companion; "it be my belief, Mister Beans, thee beest troubling thee head about parson!"

"Is he a parson?" demanded Joe.

Ralph grinned, and shook his shaggy head, as he made answer, "that the folks called un so at Mortlake!"

"And what sort of character did he bear?" added the young man.

"A bad un," replied the boy; "ran away in debt—cheated Farmer Jacks of a power o' money! Skitter, the tailor, says that he has had no luck with his wife, and all because he married un!"

At the word *married*, Joe became violently agitated—a terrible impression crossed his mind: he might be wrong in entertaining it, but he determined to act as if assured that he was right. He had but little time to decide and act.

"Can you climb, Ralph?" he said, pointing to the park wall, which ran parallel with the narrow footpath they were traversing.

"Climb!" repeated the boy; "egad, I should think so! what does 'ee think I ha' gotten legs for?"

"Over with you, then!" said the young man, pointing to the wall.

In a few moments they both stood on the other side.

"Now Ralph, continued Joe Beans, "follow my directions, and I'll make a man of you for life!"

"Ees!"

"You see that tree?"

He pointed out to the boy a lofty sycamore, which grew at the end of the avenue crossing the park.

"Ees, Mister Beans!"

"Creep like a snake along the grass, and climb amongst the branches; watch if any one arrives, and is admitted to the house; but, above all, don't stir till I return!"

"I won't, thof it be all night!"

"Good! I must return!"

The urchin looked towards Joe Beans, and the expression of his ill-shaped countenance became almost human—for his elf-like features were lit with an expression of gratitude and regard such as he had seldom entertained for any human being. Joe, perhaps, was the only person in the world who had ever treated him with real kindness.

"Mister Beans, he said, "be it parson thee beest afeard on?"

"Yes—no!—that is, I can't explain. I have not a moment to lose!"

"He shan't get to the house!" added the boy, resolutely.

"How can you prevent it?" demanded the young man, with a look of astonishment.

"Break his neck, or his leg, if he means any harm to thee! Thof he has given I a crown, I always thought he wor nought for a parson; perhaps," added the urchin, drawing the coin from his pocket, "it be a bad un, arter all?"

Ralph once more placed the piece between his teeth; but it stood the test—it was a good one.

"No—no!" exclaimed Joe, after an instant's reflection; "do as I tell you, and all, perhaps, will be well. It would take some time," he mentally calculated, "to prepare the poor young lady, even if they contemplate such a piece of villainy! Watch if he approaches the house; I will soon be back. Away with you at once!"

The last directions of course were spoken aloud.

"I will, Mister Beans!" said the urchin, throwing himself upon the grass, and creeping as stealthily as a pole-cat in the direction towards the tree. His companion did not wait more than a few seconds to note his progress. Catching the branch of a lofty cedar, which grew near, he swung himself over the wall of the park, and directed his steps towards the spot where he had left the postillion and his horses. Without a word he sprang into the saddle, and galloped like a madman towards the village—the astonished lad shouting and calling after him.

"This be a rum go!" said the lad, scratching his head; "first the chaise upset and broken, now the brown mare stolen! I does wonder what old master will say! Shan't I catch it when I drive into the Angel Yard!"

CHAPTER XLII.

Since fortune cannot recompense me better
Than to die well, and not my master's debtor.
SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN Dr. Orme, accompanied by our hero, Farmer Ashton, and the Khan, returned to the house, they were met at the door by Mrs. Jarby, who, with a face full of importance, informed him that Martin had awoke from the deep sleep into which he had fallen immediately after the examination, and had been anxiously inquiring for him.

"Any change?" inquired the rector, in a tone of alarm.

"Only for the better," replied the old lady. "I heard the surgeon tell the butler that he entertained strong hopes of his recovery. Heaven grant it!" she added. "He has proved himself a good and faithful servant to our late dear master; there are few of us left who served Sir William in his youth, poor gentleman!"

"And did Martin request to see me alone?" said the rector.

"Alone, sir."

"Not Henry?"

"No!"

Feeling that it was a request which he ought to lose no time in complying with, the worthy man directed his steps to the chamber of the sufferer, whom he found propped up in his bed upon pillows. Despite the agitation which he had recently undergone, his manner was calm and collected; the expression of his features was of profound thought. Occasionally he passed his withered hand across his wrinkled brow, as if to smooth the deeply-indentured lines which his cogitations knit there.

Once or twice he muttered to himself, "Would I were in the stable: I should think better there—better there! I never could collect my thoughts half so well in any other place!"

Dr. Orme seated himself by the bed-side, and silently took the hand of the speaker. The old man raised his clear, blue eye, and gazed upon him for some moments in silence. Tears at last began to trickle down his pale and furrowed cheeks. He thought of the words the baronet had spoken to him at midnight, in the library at Carrow, when he discovered to him the secret recess in which to conceal his will.

"Cheer thee, old Fidelity!" said the clergyman, kindly. "I have great hopes of your recovery."

"It is not of myself that I was thinking," murmured Martin, with a sigh: "what was my worthless life to his? I have been thinking of my dear, good master and his sufferings! I wish to see you, sir, to inquire respecting his will."

The rector explained to him the manner in which that important document had been abstracted from the person of the lawyer, and the share which Will Sideler had taken in that mysterious transaction.

During the recital, the brow of the sufferer became yet more deeply wrinkled, and he nodded and smiled significantly.

"But do not fear," continued the narrator; "although you and the rest of Sir William's faithful and attached domestics have been deprived of the reward of their services—a provision for their age, which I am sure my lamented friend had made—I will see that his intentions are not defeated."

Martin waved his hand impatiently.

"You shall never want!" added the rector.

"It is not that—it is not that!" exclaimed the aged groom; "what matters it whether I close my days in the poor-house or die in a ditch, so that those he loved are cared for? And no trace, you say, has been discovered of the will?"

"None!"

The speaker was not aware of the faint clue which Elworthy had obtained from the valet of the late Captain Elton.

"It is time I spoke, then," said Martin, with resolution. "I cannot find it myself, but I can direct you where to place your hand upon it."

"The will?"

The old man nodded in the affirmative.

"A few days before the murder of my master," he continued, "Sir William sent for me into the library, and directed me to disclose to him the secret places where, in troublesome times, his ancestors had been accustomed to conceal the heirlooms, jewels, and family plate, together with the title-deeds of the Mowbray estates. There are a dozen such hiding-places, at least, in the abbey. I pointed out two to him. In the first we deposited the treasures and records of his house; in the latter," he added, "the duplicate copy of his last testament."

"Great heavens!" exclaimed the rector, deeply agitated by the importance of the discovery, which filled him with hope and confidence; "we shall defeat the machinations of his enemies yet!"

"We shall."

"Where are they?"

"To only two persons in the world," continued the aged domestic, "dare I reveal the secret."

"Two persons!" repeated the rector, with intense anxiety.

"Yes! I have a secret for each. To my master's friend I may point out the will; but to his son alone dare I disclose the secret of the treasures and the papers: and I shall live to see him," he added, with sudden energy, at the same time grasping the arm of his hearer; "I am sure I shall! God will not permit the bad man to inherit! The rightful heir will be found! I shall see him in his father's place! I could not die till then!"

"Heaven grant it!" said the worthy clergyman; "heaven grant it! But the will, Martin—the will! The happiness of Ellen's life depends upon it!"

"Where is my dear young lady," inquired Martin.

"With her relative, Colonel Mowbray, whom the Chancellor has appointed guardian of her person and fortune!"

"He her guardian!" exclaimed the old man, passionately. "Heaven help her, then! for she is in the hands of one who never yet respected the ties of blood, the helplessness of woman, or the confidence of man! Listen to me!" he continued. "On the night I met Sir William in the library, he used these words. I treasured them in my memory, as I did every syllable which fell from his honored lips. 'Martin,' he said, 'I have selected you as the oldest servant of my house, and Dr. Orme—a true and valued friend to whom I intend to confide the secret—to be the guardians of my last will, to be produced only in the event of accident or crime causing the disappearance of the one in the hands of my solicitor.' The second casket, he added, was never to be disclosed but to his son. In pointing out where the first is concealed to you, I feel I but fulfil his wish. He would have told you himself, had not the hand of the midnight murderer cut short his thread of life."

"The will! the will!" exclaimed Dr. Orme, impatiently.

"You know the library, sir?"

"Yes! yes!"

"And the shield in carved oak over the chimney-piece?" added Martin.

"I have observed it a hundred times," replied the rector; "it has the device of the Mowbray family:

'IN TRAN VAST. (IN FIDELITY FIRM!')

Seldom that a race has merited it."

"Press the bleeding hand in the shield upwards," continued the old man, "and it will disclose a small recess, in which you will find the testament. Heaven grant that it prove not too late to defeat the villainy of his unnatural brother! who, unless I wrong him, rejoices more at the prospect of succeeding to Sir William's estates than sorrows for his loss."

The speaker was overcome by the effort he had made, which, added to the excitement of the previous examination in the morning, severely taxed his strength. Within a few minutes after the disclosure, he turned upon his side, and slept like a tired child.

Dr. Orme silently left the room.

"The mist—the mist disperses!" he murmured, as he descended to the apartment in which he had left our hero; "and the hideous outline of all the actors in this dreadful tragedy appears more and more distinct! We shall recognize their features soon; for Will Sideler and the young Indian, I suspect, are not the only authors of this cruel murder!"

Henry's first inquiry, on the return of the rector, was for Martin. He did not ask the subject upon which the poor old man had sent for him; but his looks betrayed the anxiety he endured.

"He is better—much better," answered the rector; and has communicated some important information."

The Khan and Farmer Ashton appeared scarcely less interested than our hero.

"Touching the last will of Sir William."

"The will?" eagerly exclaimed his hearers.

"Yes!" continued the rector; "in a few hours it will be in my possession, and then we may defy the usurped authority of Colonel Mowbray!"

He was about to relate all that had passed in the sick man's chamber, when the door of the library opened, and, to the astonishment of all present, the ayah entered the apartment. There was an air of sullen resolution upon her dark countenance, which indicated a struggle between her feelings and her purpose. Henry—conscious that she had ever been the enemy of his suit to Ellen—beheld her with a feeling of vague mistrust.

Without noticing any of the party present, the Indian woman advanced direct towards our hero, and, gazing on him for a few moments, said, with a sigh:

"So you have returned?"

"To the confusion of my enemies, no doubt!" replied the young man; among whom I have not to learn that Zara is one of the most bitter!"

"I was your enemy!" observed the ayah.

He looked upon her doubtfully, suspecting that her visit concealed some design inimical to his happiness and love.

"But am no more so," continued the woman; "would I could be; but the strong love of the fair girl hath broken my resolution! It is my heart which yields," she added, scornfully; "not my reason!"

"Explain!" said Dr. Orme, impatiently; "what mean you?"

"In two hours," replied the ayah, "Ellen and Meeran Hafaz will stand together at the altar—the priest is ready—and—"

"Never!" exclaimed our hero, interrupting her; "never—never! The thunders of heaven are not idle terrors—they will not sleep, and see the orphan girl, who loved Sir William as a child should love its parent, plight her faith to —!"

"Any but the man her uncle's love designed for her!" hastily interrupted the Khan: evidently he had some reason for preventing the speaker finishing the sentence.

Zara looked alternately at both the speakers: she was ready to save her foster-child, but worlds would not have tempted her, had she known it, to utter a word to compromise the safety of Meeran.

"Heaven will not prevent!" she observed, with a scornful smile; "but her own resolution can and will! She is armed—armed against her own life! Meeran may clasp her hand, but it will be that of a corse!"

The heart of Henry bounded with gratitude, love, terror, and admiration, at the devoted constancy of his betrothed.

"Save her!" he exclaimed, "and I will bless you! Not for myself, but for her sake, I ask it. Remember it is the child you nurtured at your breast—who loved you with such confiding affection, till you—"

He paused, not wishing to complete the sentence, fearing it should offend her.

"Betrayed her?" said the ayah, fixing her eyes steadily upon his agitated features.

He was silent.

"Had I seen," she continued, "one girlish weakness—detected one irresolute movement of her heart—I had persevered! But I cannot sacrifice the child I have nurtured! On one condition I will save her—bestow on you the choicest treasure earth can yield—the being whose love you have won, who would brave death for you!"

"Name it—oh, name it?" exclaimed the excited youth.

"If gold," added Dr. Orme, "fear not to state your price! I am rich, and, to secure the happiness of my adopted son, will cheerfully satisfy your avarice!"

His speech was cut short by the scornful glance of the Indian woman.

"Gold?" she repeated; "how the sons of Europe judge the rest of mankind by their own sordid nature! Could you count down to me the treasures of India—all my unhappy country has been plundered of by your accursed race—it would not tempt me! Zara is not to be bribed or bought save through her feelings!"

Both the rector and Henry were struck by the simple dignity of the speaker's manner, as she pronounced the above words. It was impossible to doubt them, for the accent in which they escaped her was that of truth.

"Promise me," she continued, "that you will not raise your hand—seek directly or indirectly—to injure Meeran Hafaz, and I will prevent this marriage; refuse me this, and I remain a passive spectator of all the misery that may follow!"

This was a sore trial to the lover of Ellen, who looked upon avenging the death of his benefactor and the outrage to his niece as a sacred duty—a legacy bequeathed to him by the dead. He could not promise, if that promise involved the immunity of Sir William's assassin. With a pale countenance and quivering lip, he refused the pledge which Zara required.

"I cannot give it," he said; "and I will not deceive you! I will hunt the villain through the world!"

"Farewell!" said the ayah, coldly; at the same moment advancing towards the door of the library.

It was now the Khan's turn to interfere.

"Stay!" he whispered to our hero; "your refusal has been rash and inconsiderate! Have you no firmer reliance on the justice of heaven? Think you its powers are so limited that it can find no other arm, save yours, to execute its purposes? Leave him to that which sooner or later must overtake him!"

Henry hesitated.

"Remember," added Dr. Orme, speaking in the same undertone, "that human justice is already on his track!"

"Well, then," said the young man, after a momentary struggle with his feelings, "unless in self-defence, or to protect those whose lives are far dearer to me than my

own, I solemnly promise never to raise my hand against my rival!"

"And you will keep your pledge?" demanded Zara.

"As I hope to call Ellen mine!"

"Tis well," she continued. "Ellen is at the abbey! In two hours she is to be forced into a marriage which her soul abhors; it is to take place in the library; her uncle and the false, painted sepulchre—the heartless thing he calls his wife—will both be present! I will place you where you may witness everything which passes; and at the moment when all but heaven and Zara appear to have deserted her, step in and save your bride!"

"The library?" exclaimed the lover, bitterly; "it is indeed the fitting place for such a crime—it is fitting that the scene of the first sacrifice should have been chosen for the second! Come, come," he added, turning to the rector and the Khan; "my heart is consuming with its own impatience—the blood mounts to my brain, like fire from the volcano's troubled bosom! Let us to the abbey!"

"It is not yet the time," observed Zara.

"We must have assistance," added the rector; "wait the return of Joe and his friends."

"It was this I feared," said the renegade, placing his hand upon the arm of our hero. "I was aware of the place where her worthless uncle had sequestered his innocent ward, but would not disclose it till the fitting moment! Be cool," he added; "suffer your impetuous spirit to be guided by those whose judgment passion cannot lead astray!"

"Cool!" repeated the youth, dashing his hand aside; "Cool; when the deadly serpent has already twined a poisonous fold around the innocent dove—when ruffian violence threatens the maid I love—my boyhood's earliest dream—my manhood's crown and hope! Cool!" he repeated bitterly; "I must change my nature first!"

Without waiting a reply, he rushed from the apartment, and the next instant was seen dashing like a madman over the lawn and through the shrubbery of the rectory garden.

"He will ruin all," said the Khan, "by this impetuosity! It is his destiny—who can avoid his fate?"

The affection of Farmer Ashton and Dr. Orme took a more active form. The latter ordered his carriage to be got ready on the instant, and both prepared to follow.

"Take me with you," said the ayah.

"Why?"

"To watch that the mad boy fulfills his promise—woe to him if he breaks it!"

"I too, will accompany you," added the Khan; "I have a debt to pay both to the living and the dead: the moment, perhaps, has arrived."

A few minutes later, the carriage, with the rector, Farmer Ashton, and the speaker, was rolling over the common at a rapid pace, in the direction towards Carrow Abbey.

CHAPTER XLIII.

Lead forth the victim, trembling pale—
Her tears are but the bride's sweet sorrow;
Fling over her the silver veil—
Her eyes will sparkle bright to-morrow.

BRIDE OF THE BRIDE.

No sooner was Red Ralph safely ensconced among the lofty branches of the sycamore tree at the end of the avenue, than he began to reflect on the best means of preventing the Rev. Mr. Twinetext's arrival at the abbey. Although not over gifted with intelligence, in the legitimate signification of the word, he was far from being deficient in that which is its general substitute—cunning—a quality which he resolved on the present occasion to exert to the utmost, in order to prove his gratitude to Joe Beans, whom he looked upon with the same species of savage affection and reverence with which an Indian might regard the first civilized son of Europe that had crossed his path.

Several times during his cogitations he regretted that the scene of his difficulty was no longer at Cromwell House—it would have been so easy there.

Joe had forbidden him to execute his first intention, of breaking the reverend gentleman's neck or leg: he felt monstrously inclined to disobey him.

"I mun do summat," he muttered, as he swung himself backwards and forwards, with a gentle movement, upon the branch—most probably to assist the laborious process of thinking—"more nor watch—that can't do I nor Joe any good! I bean't such a fool as folk do think I!"

Several times he scratched the rugged red mass of hair upon his poll—it would not do. In his embarrassment and desire to distinguish himself, he might have exclaimed, with the poet :

My invention comes from my pate
As birdlime does from furze: it plucks
Out brains and all.

More than once he came to the conclusion that his first idea was the best one.

"I mun break his neck or his leg," he muttered, "arter all! There be nought else left for it!"

Fortunately for the reverend object of his cogitations, Ralph, after having all but settled the point in his own mind, cast his eyes around to take a survey of the place, and noted that at the end of the avenue there was a broad, deep ditch—in fact, it might almost be termed a moat—which separated the garden-ground around the house from the rest of the park. It had originally been dug to prevent the deer or cattle from destroying the shrubs and flowers. A luminous idea immediately seized him, and his little, deep-set, ferret-like eyes sparkled with joy and mischief. The ditch, which was only partially filled with water, could only be crossed, except at a considerable distance lower down, by a rustic bridge, intended merely for foot passengers—the carriage drive being at the opposite side of the park.

"It'll do!" he said; "it'll do!"

Carefully descending from his elevated

perch, he glided down the trunk of the tree, and seated himself, just as he saw the Rev. Mr. Twinetext approaching up the avenue, evidently fatigued with the weight of his carpet-bag.

The urchin began to whistle: a sure sign that he meditated mischief.

"Halloa, parson!" he exclaimed, as the gentleman reached the spot where he was seated; "thee beast a plaguy time in gett'ning round! I be here afore thee?"

"And what do you want with me?" inquired the pedestrian.

"I! nought. That is nought *partikler!*" answered the lad; "only I thought as thee wor kind to I, and giv'd I five shillin', thee might speak a good word for I to some of the farmers."

"Are you out of work?"

"Ees!"

This, we are sorry to say, was not exactly true; but Red Ralph was troubled with few scruples of conscience, as far as regards uttering an untruth, when he had any purpose to gain.

"And how came you to leave Mortlake?" inquired the gentleman, who perfectly recollects him, not only from his uncouth appearance, but as one of the most troublesome and mischievous lads about the place.

"That bean't fair, parson!" replied the boy, with a grin. "I didn't ax thee!—it worn't a bum-balif tho'!"

The querist coloured slightly, and asked Ralph no more questions. The answers were embarrassing.

"Here!" he said, giving him the bag, the weight of which had tired him; "bring this after me to the house, and I will give you a shilling."

"Beest thee a-going there?"

"Yes."

"But they do say if be haunted!" observed the cunning urchin, with well-affected hesitation.

"Stuff!—nonsense!"

"Thee won't ax I to go in?"

"Go in!" repeated the gentleman; "certainly not!"

"Then I'll take it!" exclaimed Ralph; "thee doesn't mind the ghostes more nor I do Master Remnant's cows—it be thee trade, loike. I *allays* heard folks say parsons are a match for ghostes!"

"Pooh! pooh!" ejaculated the former curate of Mortlake.

"And the old un, too!" continued the lad; "that is, when they wor *good parsons*, I suppose!"

Not wishing to prolong a conversation in which he received so many not unintended hits—although they were uttered with great apparent simplicity—the Reverend Mr. Twinetext inquired if the little rustic bridge to which he pointed, was not the nearest approach to the house; and, on being answered in the affirmative, resumed his walk, leaving Ralph to follow with the bag. Just as he reached the centre of the plank—for the bridge consisted only of one, and a single hand-rail—the lad, with a vigorous effort, hurled him in.

So completely was the unprincipled man taken by surprise, that he could offer no resistance, but continued for several minutes to flounder in the stream, till he had passed under the bridge.

Ralph's delight at his achievement exceeded, if possible, that which he had felt at the capture of the warrener. A parson was so much higher game!

"Rascal! villain! I'll—pooh! I'll break every bone in your skin!" roared the gentleman, at intervals between his splashings and floundering—for the water was unpleasantly deep, and the banks so much elevated that without assistance it was impossible that he could extricate himself.

"When you catch I!" answered the urchin.

"Help me out, I say!"

"Noa, noa!" replied Ralph; "I had too much trouble to get thee in!"

"I'll—I'll give you a guinea!"

"Noa!"

"Two, you rascal!—that is, my good boy, I mean!"

"Noa! Thee bees't a-lying, I am sure—sartin!"

"Why so?"

"Because thee didst call I a good boy! Now I bean't a good boy—an thee know'st it!" added Red Ralph; "nor I don't think I be quite a bad un! Sunnumt like thee, parson, in t'water—a cross 'twixt a goose and a raven!"

This was the nearest attempt at a witticism which the speaker had ever been known to utter; and either the idea or the novelty so amused him, that he threw back his head and grinned and shouted with mirth—very much to the annoyance of the reverend Mr. Twinetext, who, by alternate menaces and offers of money, tried to induce his tormentor to assist him out of the ditch.

"I can't do that," replied the urchin; "thof I could find in my heart to help 'ee, for the fun thee hast made for I; but I'll tell 'ee what I'll do for 'ee!"

"What?" impatiently demanded his victim.

"Sit on the rail here, till constable comes to take 'ee to prison, and see that thee does not quite drown theeself."

At the allusion to a constable and a prison, the reverend gentleman secretly felt more alarm than he thought proper to express, and he once more renewed his offers to Ralph—but with no better success. The boy gravely seated himself upon the slender rail, and continued to watch the fate of the parson, and for the arrival of Joe.

A danger which neither the tormentor nor the object of his persecution had foreseen, at last presented itself, in the shape of a solitary swan—one of the pair which Ellen had been accustomed to feed. The keepers, since the abandonment of the abbey, after the death of Sir William, had grown negligent, and some poacher had shot its mate.

As the bird came sailing majestically

down the stream, it erected its feathers, and emitted that peculiar half-hiss and half-croaking cry, which indicates anger.

"Ralph—Ralph!" shouted the clergyman, "do you not see?"

"Ees, it won't hurt 'ee!"

"Help me out!" continued the parson, seriously alarmed—for the bird, with no very amicable intentions, was approaching most uncomfortably near to his person. "You will be hanged, you young villain, for this!"

"Not if swan kills 'ee, parson!" roared the boy; "that bean't my fault—I didn't set un on. But I won't bear no malice to 'ee," he added, as the hostile intentions of the bird became more and more apparent; "here be a stick to help 'ee."

So saying, he threw to the discomfited clergyman a strong switch of black-thorn which he carried in his hand, and then settled himself as comfortably as the narrowness of the rail would permit, to watch the issue of the contest: which, as he afterwards described it, "wor a sight more cuarious nor cat-hunting."

The Rev. Mr. Twinetext contrived to steady himself by grasping the branches of an overhanging willow with his left hand; whilst with his right, which was armed with the stick Red Ralph had thrown him, he prepared to ward off the attacks of his antagonist, who, with stately evolutions, sailed in semicircles round him—gradually approaching nearer than was agreeable to his person. The neck of the bird was thrown gracefully back, as if ready to strike him, and its plumage erected till its body appeared considerably larger than its usual size.

"Mind his wing, parson!" roared his tormentor; "they do hit plaguy hard, I've heerd folk say."

Even Ralph began to feel uneasy at the fury of the contest which ensued. The swan, now thoroughly enraged, rushed, rather than swam towards the man, whose presence in its own peculiar domain had so greatly irritated it, and directed a succession of blows with its powerful wing at the intruder's head, who parried them with a dexterity which might have been more naturally expected in a prize-fighter than one of his sacred calling.

"Bravo—bravo!" shouted the urchin, at the same time clapping his hands with delight.

These exclamations were renewed at intervals, as the bird, whose courage and fury increased at the blows it received upon its pinions and body, renewed the attack. Sometimes it would sail sullenly away to a short distance, with its plumage depressed—then it would suddenly wheel round, erect its feathers and arch its wings, and rush with fresh ardor to the contest.

"Egad, parson," observed Ralph, highly amused at the result of one of these attacks; "but he hit thee then!"

Twinetext began to feel seriously alarmed—for the strength and rage of his antagonist appeared to increase rather than di-

minish with the contest. He had already received several severe blows from the pinions of the bird, and he roared out lustily for assistance.

"It be no use, I tell 'ee!"

"Help—help!" shouted the parson.

"No one will hear 'ee!"

Ralph was mistaken. The cries of the clergyman and his own wild shouts of laughter were heard in the house. A side door was opened, and two of the servants of Meeran Hafaz appeared—they were both of them well armed.

It would be difficult to say whether or not the confederate of Joe Beans had ever heard the well-known line, that the better part of valor is discretion. Most probably not. But he certainly illustrated it in the present instance; for no sooner did he perceive the men, with their guns, advancing towards him, than he slid from the rail, and crept, with the agility of a stoat, or wild cat, into a thick clump of underwood—from which retreat he had the mortification of seeing his old enemy, the parson, dragged from his perilous situation in the ditch. To be sure, he appeared more dead than alive: so that Ralph was not altogether deprived of consolation.

One of the servants returned with the Rev. Mr. Twinetext to the abbey. The other, directed, doubtless, by some information which he had received, began to cross the rustic bridge, carrying his gun upon his shoulder. He stopped to pick up the carpet-bag, which had been dropped there in the struggle.

The boy waited to see whether the man intended to proceed any farther than the bridge before he decided how to act.

"I am off!" he muttered, as the domestic crossed it. "Guns, and such-like bludeons bean't no good! Ah, look!" he added, as he noticed that the man began to peer into every clump of shrubs and underwood that he passed: "thee must have sharp eyes to find I!"

With as little noise as possible, Ralph pushed his way through the brambles and cover; nor paused till he had placed a considerable distance between himself and his pursuer.

During the day, both Colonel Mowbray and his precious lady had been considerably puzzled to understand the calm, quiet demeanor of Ellen. The poor girl neither descended to complaint nor entreaties.—Both, she knew, would have been unavailing. Once or twice, when her glance encountered that of her unprincipled relative, his eyes sank beneath her gaze. His wife, on the contrary, impudently braved it. Like most little minds, she felt a degraded pleasure in tyrannizing over any one who had either mortified her vanity, or otherwise offended her. She would have been delighted to have seen Ellen kneeling at her feet, and imploring her pity or protection; but the petty triumph was denied her. The orphan felt that she must rely upon herself, since all human aid appeared to have deserted her.

One consolation—and it was no trivial one—she possessed in the midst of her sorrow.

Meeran Hafaz scrupulously kept his promise, and had not intruded upon her presence. She knew that she must meet him in the library at the hour appointed: but she had fortified her soul with prayer, and was prepared for the fearful interview.

"I scarcely know what to make of the girl!" observed Lady Mowbray to her husband, as they left the chamber of their persecuted niece. "She is not sullen or reigned!"

"True!" observed the colonel, with a sarcastic smile. "She is like most women who have been defeated!"

"She does not consider herself defeated, I am certain," answered her ladyship.—"There is something which I cannot comprehend—which—"

"You had better not puzzle yourself to find out," said her husband, interrupting her; "since in a few hours it will explain itself! Would the night were over!" he added. "I am tired of the presence of this Meeran!"

"And I, too! But of course you will keep faith with him?"

"Of course!" replied the colonel. "How else am I to obtain the fortune of my niece? Once married, and on their voyage to India—which I should recommend the bridegroom to arrange as soon as possible, for many reasons—"

"And I, also!" chimed in her ladyship, significantly.

"My mind will be at rest," added the gentleman, concluding his previous speech.

"And mine, too! When does the Rev. Mr. Twinetext arrive?"

"I expect him hourly."

"Of course," said the lady, "he can be depended on?"

"Of course!" answered her husband. "I seldom fail in the choice of my instruments!"

To Ellen the departure of her unworthy relatives had been a relief: it enabled her to fortify her mind with prayer. She did not require it to strengthen her resolve: love gave her nerve for that.

Firmly as she had decided upon sacrificing her life rather than be forced to give her hand to the man whom she felt to be in conception, if not in act, the murderer of her uncle, it was not without a struggle that she had taken the dreadful resolution.

"Heaven will pardon me!" she repeatedly murmured to herself; "it is the only choice between perjury and dishonour!"

During the day she had written two long letters: one containing a touching farewell to Henry; and the second explaining the reasons of her voluntary death.

"It will vindicate my memory to the world!" she said, placing the last epistle under her pillow, "and perhaps avenge it!"

The one to her lover, having been passionately kissed and bedewed with her tears, she concealed in her bosom. She felt that it would one day reach him—his

eyes dwell upon every word her trembling hand had traced. It seemed to unite, by some invisible chain, the living with the dead ; for such, despite the promise of the ayah to preserve her, she already considered herself.

There was something fearful in the desolation of one so young and innocent—rich in the world's gifts of birth and fortune, as well as nature's more costly one of beauty—which in her case had proved, indeed, a fatal dower—fatal not only to herself, but to her friends ; since it had caused the madness of Meoran Hafaz—the murder of her uncle—the sufferings of poor old Martin and Henry.

Yet she was scarcely conscious that she possessed it.

"It is hard to die!" she murmured, "die, without one being whom I love to close my eyes, or bid the parting spirit peace—die alone and unlamented! Not unlamented!" she added ; "one noble heart, at least, will mourn my destiny!—one true arm avenge it!"

The timepiece in the chamber of the prisoner struck the hour of seven. She shuddered, as the sound reminded her that, in two hours more, the crisis of her fate would be decided.

Throwing herself upon her knees, she fixed her eyes upon the portrait of Sir William, which, at her urgent entreaty, Colonel Mowbray had directed to be removed from the picture-gallery to her apartment.

"Spirit of the dead," she exclaimed, "watch over and protect me!"

CHAPTER XLIV.

Be thy heart bold, thy weapon strong,
Avenge thou Blanch of Devon's wrong.

SCOTT.

RED RALPH had not retreated more than half a mile through the thick underwood and young plantations, before he distinctly heard the tramping of approaching footsteps in an opposite direction. He paused, scratched his shaggy head—his usual resource when puzzled—and reflected for a few moments what he should do.

"If I go back," he reasoned, "I meet the chap with the gun, who would no more mind shooting I, than I should mind shooting a rabbit! If *forrards*, I tumble into the hands of the lord knows who!"

The prospect, it must be confessed, was not very inviting, and the boy made the best choice, perhaps, that was left him, when he decided upon continuing his route. He thought it better to fall into the hands of those whom he did not know, and who might prove friends, than into the grasp of one respecting whose hostile intentions there could be very little doubt.

If Ralph could not reason, it must be admitted that he sometimes jumped to very safe conclusions.

Fortunately for his inventive powers, which, as well as his reasoning ones, were exceedingly limited, he had not to draw

upon them again ; for, listening attentively, he recognized the voice of his friend and patron, Joe Beans—who, with a party of rustics, was on his way to the abbey. With a shout, he sprang from the covert where he had crouched to meet him, exclaiming, in his usual chuckling voice : "that he was never so glad to meet a friend in all his life."

"Why?"

"'Cause I be foller'd!" replied the boy.

"And who follows you?"

In as few words as possible, Ralph explained to him his adventure with the parson and the swan. The anger which the young man at first felt at the lad's having disobeyed his injunction, and quitted the tree, was allayed when he discovered that it had been the means of delaying the arrival of the parson, whose presence, he instinctively felt, boded no good to the happiness either of Ellen or his dear Master Harry. So great had been his anxiety that he had not returned, as he had promised, to the rectory ; but proceeded, as soon as he had gathered a party of friends in the village, at once to the abbey.

This party consisted of half a dozen stout young fellows who had been the companions of his and Henry's boyish sports. There was not one of them but would have risked some danger to serve either Joe or his friend.

As the expedition was considered entirely under the command of the last-named personage, he proceeded to point out the manner in which they were to approach the south side of the building.

"But how are we to get in?" demanded one of the young men.

"Doors be all locked!" added Ralph.

Our readers have not forgotten the means by which, on a previous occasion, Joe and the sexton had obtained entrance to the deserted mansion, when they visited it with poor old Martin in their company. He resolved to enter it in the same manner now.

Just as they were about to proceed, they were startled by some one breaking his way through the copsewood near them.

"Here he be!" exclaimed Ralph, thinking it was his pursuer ; "but I bean't afraid on un!"

One or two of the young men who were armed, levelled their guns, not knowing what or whom to expect.

The branches were dashed on one side, and Henry Ashton, his hair wild, his clothes torn with the furze and brambles, stood in the narrow, open sward before them. In order to arrive at the abbey sooner, he had taken the direct route to the house—neither plantation nor lake had stopped him : he had broken his way through the one and swam the other. His heart and brain were on fire—he looked and felt like a madman—in every breeze he fancied he heard the despairing cry of Ellen appealing to him for help. No wonder that it unnerved him.

"Harry—Master Harry!" exclaimed the faithful Joe ; "stay—here be true friends to serve thee!"

Our hero, who was about to pursue his headlong career, stopped at the sound of the well-known voice of his humble friend.

"Joe!" he said.

"Ay, Master Harry! ready to die for you, if it be necessary; but I need not tell you—you know it all!"

"I do!"

"That Miss Ellen—"

"Is in the abbey, in the hands of her uncle's murderer—of her enemy and mine!"

"We'll have her out!" exclaimed one of the young farmers, resolutely, "if we pull down the old walls! What! you do not remember me?" he added, seeing that Henry Ashton gazed upon him with an inquiring eye; "true, I have been absent from Carrow these seven years, but I have not forgotten the generous fellow who, when we were boys together, jumped off the point to save my life, at the risk of his own!"

"I cannot thank you," replied Henry, grasping him by the hand; "but you have well repaid my boyish services by your assistance at this hour!"

Whilst Henry and Joe were arranging their plans, and giving the necessary instructions to their friends, Red Ralph—who, with that terrier-like instinct which constituted his highest claim to intelligence, had thrown himself upon the sward, with his ear close to the ground, to catch the first sound of an approaching footstep—suddenly started from his recumbent position, exclaiming, with a loud voice:

"They be a comin'!"

"Who?" demanded our hero.

"Don't know—but here they be!"

The rustling of the branches announced that the intruders were not far off. Ralph stunk round to the rear of his friends, as a measure of precaution: not that the boy was naturally a coward, only—to use his own words—he had a natural antipathy to guns, pistols, and such-like bludgeons. No sooner had he taken what he considered a secure position, than the Khan and Farmer Ashton made their appearance. They had heard, from some idler on the common, that Henry had been seen to scale the wall of the park; and they had quitted the carriage to follow him—the trampled grass and broken branches of the trees affording them sufficient clue.

"Uncle!" exclaimed our hero.

"Thank God," said the honest farmer, removing his broad-brimmed hat, and wiping the perspiration from his sun-burnt brow, "we have found thee at last! What wouldst thou do?"

"Proceed at once to the abbey!" replied the young man, with flashing eyes and quivering lip; "meet this hated Meean face to face—rend the trembling dove from the vulture's gripe, and—"

"Kill her!" said the Khan, in a calm, deep tone; "break your promise to the ayah, and provoke a contest which may end fatally to one or both of you! You must be patient!"

"Patient!" repeated the agitated lover, "and know the serpent near the heart of

her I love, ready to sting it! Patient, whilst the monster has already twined its hideous coils around her! You speak like a man to whom affection, duty, manhood, are but shadows—not breathing realities!"

"Don't 'ee, Harry!" said his uncle in a tone of entreaty. "Don't 'ee speak so to him—thee mayst one day repent it! He—"

A look from the renegade seemed to prohibit his giving utterance to the words which were about to follow.

"Mr. Ashton, I am sure," he said, "will be guided by those who *can* have no other wish than his happiness and welfare! The rector and Colonel Butler are under the guidance of the ayah."

"I mistrust that woman!" interrupted Henry.

"She will not deceive them now!" continued the speaker; "place yourself under my directions. To me the ins and outs, recesses, and quaint nooks of Carrow, are better known than to any other living man, except poor old Martin. I will conduct you where, at the appointed moment, you may step between Ellen and your rival—Meean and his passions."

The doubting youth regarded him for an instant in silence: it was possible that he might be sincere in his offer; equally possible, too, that the Khan might deceive him.

"And what pledge have I of your fidelity?" he demanded.

"Simply that my life will be in your hands," replied the renegade, "if I betray you! You are armed; the weapon in your hand, resolution in your heart and eye. If I prove false, level, and strike me dead!"

"And I will, too!" muttered Joe; but so inaudibly that the words were only caught by Ralph.

"Don't 'ee talk of such an *unnatural* thing!" exclaimed the farmer, with a look of horror; "better a thousand times that Henry should break my old heart—nay, e'er kill me—than harm a hair of his!"

"Friend's head!" hastily added the Khan, finishing the sentence for him. "You are right: I am indeed his friend—his true and faithful friend—although the headstrong boy will not believe it! Farewell!" he added, turning away; "I would have served you, had your rash humour and headstrong will permitted me!"

"Stay!" exclaimed our hero, taking him by the hand. "I am wilful, but I am not ungrateful. Something whispers to my heart that I am bound to trust you! Did you know," he added, "how that heart has been wrung, its confidence abused, its feelings trampled on, you would wonder that so much faith in my fellow-man remained?"

"Tis well!" said the Khan, withdrawing his hand, with an air of restraint. "You have decided wisely!"

By his direction, the party, instead of proceeding in a direction towards the abbey, made their way to the little ruined pavilion, which jutted over the wall of the park, where the ayah had held her first rendezvous with the renegade.

"Here be stairs!" exclaimed Ralph, who

had run on before ; "but the door be lock-ed!"

Several of the young men offered to break it open.

"It needs not," replied their guide ; "the entrance is from the apartment above."

"Where, then?" demanded the impatient Henry, whose heart and mind yielded alternately to the most cruel doubts or hopeful confidence.

"Here!" said the Khan ; at the same time pointing to a large stone under the staircase, which rose on the exterior of the building. "This is the entrance to the passage which communicates with the little vaulted chamber in which was discovered the gibern of the warrener, and is connected, by a similiar contrivance, with the library."

All present felt that the speaker had thrown an additional light upon the circumstances of Sir William's murder.

"Are you satisfied?" he continued.

Henry could only extend his hand in token that he was—so impatient did he feel to tread the gloomy maze, and reach the scene of action. By a simple contrivance the stone, which turned upon an iron axis, was made to revolve, disclosing an aperture sufficiently large for them to enter one at a time. Joe Beans was about to proceed when his friend placed his hand upon his arm to restrain him.

"No, Joe!" he said ; "not even to you can I resign the post of honour."

"But it may be one of danger, Master Harry!" observed the faithful fellow.

"The greater reason that it should be mine."

"But if any harm——"

"Joe!" said the young man, "I cannot dispute! My heart and arm are steel! I will!"

His friend at once gave way. Few who knew him ever contended with our hero, after he had once pronounced those words.

But for once he was mistaken ; during the contest between the friends, Red Ralph had quietly glided through the aperture.

"Drat that boy!" exclaimed Joe Beans, when he perceived it ; "there will be some mischief yet!"

CHAPTER XLV.

For not in vain the helpless maid,
In sorrow's hour—misfortune's need—
To heaven and every saint hath pray'd,
To mar their most unholy deed.

OLD BORDER BALLAD.

THE library at Carrow Abbey had been hastily arranged for the ceremony of Ellen's marriage with Meeran Hafaz. The large oaken table—a relic from the ruined chapter-house—covered with books and papers, had been moved from its usual position in the centre of the room, and a smaller one placed in its stead.

To give it something of an alter-like appearance, Colonel Mowbray had directed it to be covered with a rich drapery of Utrecht velvet and a fine Holland cloth. Two massive silver candlesticks with tapers had been added, and the old black-

letter Book of Common Prayer, with its rich binding and curiously wrought clasps—which, since the days of James I., had been used in the family chapel—was lying open at the marriage ceremony, upon a cushion between them.

The apartment had a gloomy, cheerless air. The portraits of the former possessors of Carrow—many of them from the matchless pencil of Vandyke—seemed to frown disapprovingly from the walls upon the preparations for the sacrifice of their beautiful and innocent descendant.

Even the reckless spirit of Meeran felt the chilling influence of that sombre room ; an ill-boding presentiment sat like a spell upon him—he tried in vain to shake it off. The silence was oppressive—he could not detect the sound of his own footfall, as he paced, with impatient strides, the richly carpeted floor. More than once he fancied that the portrait of Sir William, which hung at the end of the library, facing the temporary altar, regarded him with an angry, mocking expression.

"This is folly!" he murmured ; "bred of sick fancies and unhealthy dreams! In a moments my triumph over my detested rival will be assured, and Ellen mine—won by a thousand sufferings and crimes! Crimes!" he slowly repeated, as he fixed his eyes upon the likeness of the murdered baronet. "Pshaw! there are no such things as crimes! I have mixed with the pale sons of Europe, till I share their superstitions! We are the creatures of destiny—atoms which fall into their allotted space—endure their appointed pains—move and act but at its sovereign will : the iron law which governs us must answer for its instruments!"

As the proud fatalist uttered his unholy creed, there was a something at his heart—a still, small voice—which gave the lie to the sophistry of his brain—told him that when the Deity bestowed on man the noble gift of reason, it rendered him responsible here and hereafter for his acts.

"By heavens, Meeran!" exclaimed Colonel Mowbray, who had entered the library during the reverie of the young Indian, "but you have a sorry air for a bridegroom, I have seen a mute at a funeral with a more joyous countenance! Marriage, after all, is not such a very serious affair : it is something like a cold bath—one plunge and it is over!"

The young man turned towards him with a faint smile—for at that moment even his presence was a relief to him.

"Ellen," added her unworthy relative, "will soon be here."

"And the priest?"

"Has arrived—so make yourself easy on that point!" answered the colonel. "By-the-bye, he seems to have met with rough treatment in the park, from some mischievous urchin who pushed him into the moat!"

"An agent of our enemies?" observed Meeran.

"I do not think so," continued his confederate ; "from all I can gather from him,

it was some ancient grudge between them. But it matters little either way," he continued ; " Ellen once wedded, we may throw wide the gates of Carrow to all comers; you will know how to defend your rights."

" Against the world!" exclaimed the young Indian, passionately ; " against heaven itself!"

The Rev. Mr. Twinetext now joined the party. Colonel Mowbray had supplied him with a change of dress. He was arrayed in his surplice and scarf, the insignia of the sacred profession which his conduct and character polluted. Although the purpose to which he was about to prostitute his ministry was an unlawful one, he entered the library with the set, smirking smile deemed the correct thing for such occasions.

" The bridegroom?" he said, bowing to Meeran, who could not restrain an involuntary expression of disgust : it was the first time he had seen him—the arrangements and terms having been made by the uncle of the victim. " Permit me to offer my congratulations," added the unworthy clergymen.

" When you have performed your office, reverend sir," observed the colonel, " they will be doubly welcome!"

There was no further attempt at conversation till the appearance of the unwilling bride, whom Lady Mowbray had gone to summon from her chamber.

The young Indian was too deeply abstracted in the contemplation of his approaching happiness, to observe the courtesies of life towards one whom he despised. He had agreed to pay the wretch the price of his services—and that, he considered, was sufficient.

To conceal his embarrassment, the Rev. Mr. Twinetext began to examine the curious black-letter volume upon the temporary altar, turning it over, leaf after leaf, with the air of a bibliomath. Whilst he was thus occupied, the two gentlemen from time to time cast impatient glances towards the door of the apartment.

It opened at last, and Ellen, followed by Lady Mowbray, made her appearance. The persecuted girl was arrayed in deepest mourning ; the only addition to her toilette being a thick black veil of Venetian lace, which hung like a sable cloud over her neck and features. The contrast was most striking : the victim resembled a marble statue of new-born day, emerging from the dusky arms of morning.

Although the countenance of the orphan was pale, it was not with terror, but resolution and strong purpose. There was neither timidity nor embarrassment in her air and manner ; on the contrary, both her uncle and Meeran observed that they had never seen her more calm and self-possessed. She reminded them of one of those Christian virgins condemned for their faith to the arena, armed with a constancy which death could not appal—sophistry or persuasion shake.

" Ellen—dear Ellen!" exclaimed the

young man, advancing to clasp her hand ; " a life of love, devotion, and happiness shall repay you for the fulfilment of your promise!"

The poor girl shrank from his touch as from that of a basilisk.

He looked both mortified and surprised.

" Meeran," she answered, in a low, firm tone, " I have kept my promise! I never broke one yet, made either to friend or enemy! Alas!" she added, with a sigh, " till I knew you I never had an enemy!"

" Enemy!" he repeated.

" My promise," she continued, " was to meet you in the library! I am here, but not for the purpose you imagine : affection to the living and the dead alike forbid it! My hand can only be bestowed where my heart is already given—and that has long since been another's!"

" Folly!" exclaimed the colonel, impatiently.

" Ridiculous, romantic nonsense!" added his wife, who appeared to feel a malignant pleasure in witnessing the subdued but expressive agony of her niece. " As if your uncle and myself ever could be brought to consent to your disgracing your name and blood by a marriage with a peasant!"

" For the obscurity of Henry's birth, madam," replied Ellen—who felt it would be treason to her absent lover to listen to a word in his detraction—" fortune only is to be blamed—the merits of his virtues belong wholly to himself! But I came not to appeal to you or my unworthy relative! Well I know your hearts are closed against me! To you, Meeran," she added, sinking upon her knee, and suddenly clasping him by the hand, " I address my prayer—for even in the fallen angel's nature, we are told, some trace of heaven yet lingers; you will not be deaf to my agony—to the pleadings of the girl you profess to love! Act nobly—wisely—and instead of a poor, worthless triumph over a child, achieve a nobler conquest—a victory over yourself! Why force me to a marriage which my heart abhors—which heaven can never sanction? In the world, you may meet with one who can requite your love—give heart for heart—to whom your love may prove as sunlight to the flowers—dew to their unfolding buds! To me it is as the shadow of the deadly upas-tree—blight, misery, and death!"

" Ellen," said the young man, at the same time endeavoring to raise her from her suppliant position ; " you ask of me a sacrifice I have not the fortitude to make! I cannot resign you—you are the light of my existence—the idol of my heart's first and only worship! I have both sinned and suffered to obtain you ; and now, when the hour has arrived which is to make you mine, the cup of bliss—fresh, sparkling, as the draught from Eden's fountain—at my parched lips, you bid me dash that draught aside, and die! I cannot—will not commit a murder on myself—for what were life without you?"

" Selfish and ungenerous man!" exclaimed the orphan, fixing on him a scorn-

ful and reproaching glance ; "without a thought or sigh, you would take mine !—Oh, how truthful, noble, does the man to whom my faith is pledged appear by this degrading contrast ! I have heard your resolution, Meeran," she added ; "now listen to mine ! Were Henry Ashton dead —were his memory no more to this sad heart than the recollection of our childish friendship—before I would consent to link my destiny with yours—to call you husband —the grave should be my bridal-bed—the shroud my marriage-robe !"

"Romance!" ejaculated Lady Mowbray, with a titter."

Her husband was about to make some observation equally heartless and impertinent, when the storm of passion, jealousy, and love, which had been gradually gathering in the heart and brain of Meeran, burst in fearful violence. Grasping the wrist of the helpless girl, he regarded her for a few moments with a silence more eloquent than words.

"Be it so!" he said, in a hoarse, hissing voice. "Though the grave prove your bridal-bed—the shroud your nuptial-robe—still you shall be mine ! I swore it when I left the shores of India for this accursed land ! I have knelt and sued—for what ? To be despised ! I have seen the love of a cur preferred to mine ! And yet my heart was patient ; for I trusted time and devotion might win you ! I'll trust no more ! You have broken the last tie of reason and respect ! This hour shall crown my triumph !" he added, "and place an eternal barrier between my worthless rival and yourself !"

Colonel Mowbray hastily whispered a few words in the ear of the Rev. Mr. Twinetext, who stood at the side of the temporary altar—the prayer book in his hand, his thumb upon the page commencing the marriage ceremony.

"Certainly—certainly !" said the clergyman ; and immediately he began in a nasal tone, to pronounce the vow.

"Unmanly ruffian, release my hand !" said the high-spirited girl, struggling violently with her persecutor, as he dragged her towards the clergyman.

Meeran replied only by a bitter smile.

"Proceed !" said the colonel.

"You will repent this, sir !" shrieked Ellen.

"We answer for the consequences !" added Lady Mowbray.

The Reverend Mr. Twinetext had hastily mumbled the introductory prayers, and was about to put the usual question : "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man ?" when Ellen, by a violent effort, disengaged herself from the grasp of Meeran, and sprang to the end of the library, close to the secret door through which the warrener had entered on the night of her uncle's murder. In her struggle the veil had fallen from her person, and her long, black ringlets—nature's own screen to modesty—loosened from the braid which held them, fell upon her neck and bosom.

In her right hand she grasped the weapon of the ayah, which gleamed less brightly than her flashing eyes, lit with the fires of scorn and resolution.

Her persecutors were startled by the terrible energy of her despair.

"Lessen the distance between us but a step—nay, a hair's breadth !" she exclaimed, addressing the young Indian, "and God have mercy upon a dying soul !"

"She dares not !" exclaimed Lady Mowbray, with a scornful laugh.

"Trust not to that !" continued the orphan. "I am mad with terror—cruelty has driven me so—and God will pardon a poor orphan girl, who, frantic—desperate—wrought beyond patience or reason to endure—escapes from the arms of pollution unto this !"

A voice, as if from the earth, was heard to pronounce the name of Ellen. It was followed by a sharp, creaking sound, like the violent rending of the wainscot paneling asunder. The orphan recognized the voice—she deemed it a summons from the dead. Her highly-excited spirit gave way, and she sank fainting upon the floor of the apartment.

Meeran Hafaz darted forward like a tiger to secure his prey ; but before he reached her the door was burst open, and his rival stood in manly strength between him and his victim. For several moments the two young men stood gazing upon each other in all the silent eloquence of hate. A smile of triumph like that which might have adorned the archangel's brow after the fall of Lucifer—sat upon the countenance of Henry Ashton. Despair, black as a thunder-cloud, darkened the features of the Indian.

The appearance of Henry was immediately followed by the presence of Dr. Orme, the Khan, Farmer Ashton, and a party of his friends.

Meeran Hafaz felt that he was baffled—that Ellen was lost to him for ever. But revenge still appeared to him to be within his power. Confidant in his vast strength, he sprang upon the youth, in the hope of dashing him to the ground—of trampling out his life in the presence of Ellen.

But it was not at such a moment, or in the room where Sir William Mowbray had been murdered, that the object of his bounty and affection could succumb. He met his assailant with a grasp of iron and a glance of disdain.

"Dog !" he exclaimed, as he hurled him to the ground, and firmly planted his foot upon his breast. "Cold-blooded, remorseless, pitiless, cowardly assassin !"

The pangs of pride and shame which Meeran at that moment endured, as he felt the foot of his rival on his person, and listened to his accusing words, almost deprived him of reason. He would have given the world—his soul—his hopes, here and hereafter—for the power of self-annihilation.

"Remember your promise !" whispered a voice in the ear of our hero.

He turned, and beheld the ayah, in a menancing attitude, beside him.

"True," he said, "unless in self-defence, I promised not to harm him! The reptile has lost his sting! The hangman's hand may best achieve the rest!"

By direction of Dr. Orme, two of the young farmers began to bind the prostrate Meeran with strong cords.

Zara looked on—her eyes flashing fire at what she considered the indignity offered to her foster-son. Turning to our hero, she demanded, in a menacing tone, if it were thus he intended to keep his promise.

"Mr. Ashton has nothing to do with it!" observed one of the men, who was a constable. "I have a warrant against him for murder!"

Colonel and Lady Mowbray began to exchange uneasy glances.

"Murder?" repeated the Indian woman. "Whose?"

"Whose but Sir William Mowbray's?"

With a look of agony such as no words can paint, the unhappy woman rushed from the room. The meaning of the rector's words, when persuading Henry Ashton to leave his rival to the justice of heaven, was fearfully explained to her. He had fallen into its hands, and she had helped to betray him!

No sooner had the Rev. Mr. Twinetext witnessed the unexpected intrusion, than he felt most anxious to escape; and during the brief struggle between his employer and Henry, he had crept, stealthily and unobserved, towards the library door. Just as he was about to glide out of the room, he was encountered by Joe Beans and his party.

"No thee doesn't!" exclaimed Red Ralph, springing with the agility of a wild cat at his throat. "I ha' coched thee agin, and this time will keep thee! It'll be a rare tale to tell the folk when I goes back to Mortlake!"

CHAPTER XLVI.

If after every tempest comes a calm
Like this, let the waves roll Olympus high,
And duck again as low as hell's from heaven.
SHAKESPEARE.

WHEN Ellen revived to consciousness, she found herself in the arms of Dr. Orme, who with a father's tenderness had raised her from the ground, and wept with mingled joy and admiration over his recovered treasure. Henry was kneeling by her side, her hand clasped in his, his eyes fixed upon her with an expression of triumphant love.

The intoxicating happiness of the moment repaid the poor wanderer for all the misery he had endured.

"Look up!" he whispered, "angel of constancy and long-enduring truth! The hour of trial has passed, and life, full of rich sunshine and promises, dawns brightly for the future!"

"Henry!" faltered the still agitated

girl, "heaven has heard my prayer! This hour is not a dream!"

By this time Colonel Mowbray had somewhat recovered from the confusion into which even his cool, easy nature had been thrown. The fearful accusation launched against the young Indian recoiled indirectly upon himself; and after a few moments' consideration, he saw that it would be more prudent to adhere to the cause of Meeran Hafaz than abandon it.

"Pray, gentlemen, he exclaimed, "what is the meaning of this extraordinary outrage? By what right do I find the mansion taken as it were by storm, and my guest treated in this unworthy manner?"

Henry Ashton replied only by a glance of indignation. He was too deeply absorbed in his attentions to Ellen to waste words upon so contemptible a being.

"You will address yourself to me, Mr. Mowbray!" said Colonel Butler, who had entered the library with Joe Beans; "since it is by my warrant that the outrage, as you term it, has taken place!"

"Warrant?" repeated her ladyship, with a disdainful toss of the head; "ridiculous!"

The magistrate, who was a gentleman of the old school, merely bowed.

"Explain!" said her husband—"pray explain!"

"Your guest is accused, on confession of Will Sideker the warrener, of having incited him to the murder of the late Sir William Mowbray."

"Preposterous!" exclaimed the well assorted pair, with a look of affected incredulity. "Why at the very moment it occurred, he was, as twenty of the most distinguished persons in the county can witness, a guest at Bangalore Hall; confined to his bed from a wound which he received in an encounter with that young ruffian!"

The latter observation was made by her ladyship, who pointed, as she uttered it, to Henry Ashton.

"What probability?"

"What motive?"

"This is not the moment," replied Colonel Butler, "to discuss either: doubtless both will be made sufficiently apparent at the proper time and place! Meanwhile, my duty is distinctly pointed out to me—it is to commit the gentleman to prison!"

"I'll be his bail!"

"Colonel Mowbray must be aware that murder is not a bailable offence?" was the reply; and that the law makes no distinction between the man who procures, and the one who actually perpetrates the deed; nor can I refrain from observing, that this extraordinary interest in one charged with so horrible an offence, may possibly excite unpleasant suspicions against yourself!"

"My duty to my guest?"

"To your son, sir," exclaimed Henry Ashton, interrupting him—"if indeed the noble, generous Walter owned such a degraded being for his father—to your son, assassinated by the contrivance of that bold, bad man!"

"How—Walter dead?" exclaimed the astonished Colonel Mowbray.

"Ay—dead, in the dawn of hope and every manly virtue—dead, ere he had listened to the tale of his father's dishonour—dead," continued our hero, with still greater excitement, "through his resistance to the agent of Meeran Hafaz—a sacrifice to friendship and to honor!"

The unfeeling manner in which the intelligence was received, confirmed the speaker more and more in his opinion that Walter Mowbray was the son of his deceased benefactor.

"You had better retire, Lady Mowbray," observed her husband, at the same time casting a significant glance towards his niece. "This is no scene for you!"

"Nor for Ellen!" answered the artful woman, who perfectly understood his meaning. "Come, my love," she added, I will assist you to your chamber!"

At the sound of her voice, the orphan shrank yet closer to the arms of the venerable rector.

"You will do nothing of the kind, madam!" exclaimed the worthy man. "After the scene we have both witnessed and heard, Carrow Abbey is no fitting residence for the niece of my late friend!"

This was a point at which Colonel Mowbray felt himself fully authorized to interfere. The decision of the Chancellor, he knew, gave him the undisputed guardianship of Ellen. It could only be revoked by showing that he had abused his trust; and long before that period could arrive, he hoped that the possession of her person might enable him to make such terms with her friends as would prevent his name from being too freely handled in the world.

"You forgot, Dr. Orme," he said, "that Miss Ellen De Vere is not only my niece, but my ward! I shall allow no one to step between me and my just authority!"

As he spoke, he advanced with the evident intention of taking her from her protector.

"Back!" said her lover, sternly. "Pollute her not with a look! By heavens," he added, "it requires all the love, the recollection of the gratitude I owe the dead—to restrain me from telling Colonel Mowbray to his teeth what I think of his vile, heartless, and unmanly conduct!"

"Pooh, pooh, young man!" answered the uncle of Ellen, with a sneer; "you forget yourself!"

"Perhaps you will address the same observation to me," said the rector, "when I tell you that, whatever may be the consequence, Miss De Vere shall not remain another hour under the protection of Colonel Mowbray! Take her, Henry!" he added, at the same time resigning the agitated girl to our hero. "We shall see if her guardian will dispute the authority which I am armed with."

"Authority!" repeated her ladyship. "Is it the Chancellor's?"

"No, madam! It is that of the dead!"

So saying, the rector advanced towards

the chimney-piece, above which was the antique shield and device of the Mowbray's. Pushing up the bleeding hand, according to the instructions which poor old Martin had given him, he discovered the concealed recess and casket.

"What have we here?" demanded Colonel Butler.

"The will of the late Sir William Mowbray!" answered the rector, solemnly; at the same time placing the parchment, with its unbroken seals, in his hands. "Read it, colonel!" he added; "the sight of his well-known characters has too deeply affected me to enable me to decipher his wishes—but my heart guesses them!"

The envelope contained, in addition to the testament, a paper written by the late baronet, in which he stated that, feeling a presentiment his will would be tampered with, he had taken the precaution of placing the attested copy in a recess known only to himself and his faithful servant Martin, who had instructions under what circumstances he was to produce it.

There was silence in the library. Even Meieran listened anxiously for the contents of the last will of the man he had so ruthlessly caused to be murdered.

After assigning his estates in trust, the deceased proceeded to make a provision for his adopted son Henry Ashton to whose marriage with his niece, De Ellen Vere, he gave his former assent and blessing; and further bequeathed the guardianship of the orphan heiress to his long-tried and valued friend, the rector of Carrow.

A moderate sum was to be paid annually to Colonel Mowbray—who was prohibited from all interference with the management of the property—and a still larger income to his son Walter.

During the reading of the will, both the colonial and his lady with the utmost difficulty suppressed their rage and mortification: the former had yielded to a marriage which the artful woman had forced upon him as the only means of suppressing the original document in her possession; and she had linked her destiny with his from the anticipation of sharing in his ill-acquired fortune. Both were baffled in their calculations—both were disappointed.

"The will," exclaimed the gentleman, "is an impudent forgery! I shall dispute it!"

"You can do so!" answered the rector, mildly; "but in the mean time I assert my rights as guardian! Miss De Vere will remain with me, unless," he added, with a smile, "she prefers the home of her affectionate uncle!"

Ellen clung yet closer to his arm, and, with the grateful affection of a child, kissed his aged cheek.

It was finally arranged that Meieran Hafaz should remain a prisoner for the night in the strong chamber of the belfry, where his accomplice had been previously confined, and in the morning be carried to Norwich Castle, to await his trial. Joe Beans and the constable, who were to sit

up with them, were strictly charged by the magistrates not to lose sight of him for an instant.

"Never fear!" said the honest rustic; "I and Ralph will keep an eye upon him!"

As Ellen, leaning on the arm of her lover and the rector, left the library, the young Indian cast a look of such intense agony and despair upon her, that, despite her wrongs and sufferings, her heart was moved.

"Meeran," she said, "may heaven touch your stubborn nature till it turns in penitence, and forgive you as I forgive you!"

As her sylph-like form vanished through the doorway, the wretched man felt that the light had departed from his soul. He had been spurned, trampled on, bound like a felon before her—yet he bore sternly up, despite the agony which his proud soul endured; but when the dark conviction pressed upon him that he should see her no more—that her love would bless another—his fortitude gave way, and he cursed his destiny and his rival's happier star.

Colonel Mowbray and his lady left the room without exchanging a word with him; they were too much occupied with their own affairs to feel any deep interest in his. The young man smiled bitterly—but not with disappointment: it was long since he had learned to judge their mercenary natures rightly.

In a few moments it was announced to him that the carriage which was to convey him to his temporary prison was in readiness. As he crossed the hall, he encountered the ayah, who, with passionate grief, threw herself upon her knees before him.

"Curse me—kill me!" she exclaimed; "it is I who have destroyed you!"

With a bitter smile her foster-son passed on, surrounded by those who had the charge of him; and Zara, overwhelmed by her feelings, veiled her eyes to avoid witnessing his humiliation and disgrace.

It was arranged that Mr. Elworthy should remain in possession of the abbey, in the name of the executor, Dr. Orme, who, with our hero and Colonel Butler, shortly after returned to the rectory.

Joe Beans, the sexton, and the constable remained to guard the captive Meeran, at the belfry chamber, until morning.

The return of the triumphant party to the rectory with the rescued Ellen was welcomed by Susan, Mrs. Jarmy, and all the household, with joy. Fatigued and suffering as she was, the poor girl insisted upon visiting Martin in his chamber. Her heart overflowed with gratitude, first to heaven for its interference in her behalf, and next to the old groom, as its instrument.

The dim eyes of the aged domestic sparkled with something of their former brightness, as the niece of his beloved master pressed her still pale lips to his withered hand, and thanked and blessed him for having been the means of releasing her from the guardianship of her worthless uncle, by discovering the will.

"Well have you proved your gratitude,"

she added, "to the living, and your fidelity to the dead!"

"Not yet!" muttered the old man, with a meaning smile. "I have done something, but not *all*. What, Master Harry?" he added, addressing our hero, who had accompanied Ellen on her visit, and stood beside her at the foot of his bed—"what did you once tell me was the name of that curious thorny plant which lives to a hundred years before it blooms—then dies."

"The aloe, Martin."

"I told you," continued the faithful domestic "that I was like that plant."

"You did."

"I have only put forth a bud yet—not a flower; but I soon shall. I feel it—I know it. I shall live to see my master's son sit in his father's seat. Old Martin then will give up his trust; and, like the withered aloe, die in peace."

"What trust?" demanded both his visitors.

"When the hour and the heir arrive I will speak. Till then the grave is not more mute than Martin," was the reply.

Nothing more could be extracted from him; he turned upon his side, and addressed himself to sleep—for, as he said, the time and the occasion would soon arrive when he would require all his strength and memory.

How sweet that night were the slumbers of Ellen! Her dreams were of quiet, deep content, and quitted her not till morning. Susan watched by her side.

"I tell thee what it be, Philip!" said the worthy Farmer Ashton to his brother, as, after bidding our hero and the rector good night, or rather good morning, they directed their steps towards the farm; "I cannot understand 'ee!"

The Khan smiled.

"Thee hast no natural love in thee!" continued the worthy man. "When I saw how nobly Harry behaved, I could have hugged him to my old heart; whilst thee—thee, who beest his father—stood as cold and unmoved as a stone! I am sure the boy suspects something. He will be down at farm to-morrow. He will question me, and I can't—I won't tell him a lie!"

"I can only repeat what I have already told you—that it is for his good—nay, more, his *safety*—that he should not be known for my son!"

"But he is known, Philip, for thee son!"

"By whom?" demanded the renegade.

The farmer looked embarrassed and foolish.

"By your wife, I suppose?" continued the speaker, who guessed where the farmer had proved weakest.

"What could I do? Dame wor uneasy like. There had always been confidence between us, and so—I——"

"Told her that I was your brother?"

"Yes!"

"In that case," replied the Khan, "I must see Henry Ashton in the morning. Matthew! your indiscretion has provoked an explanation which may prove fatal to us both!"

CHAPTER XLVII.

And life is now a dreary waste,
A blighted tree which ne'er can bloom;
My heart has not one resting-place.
Or ark of refuge, save the tomb.

THE EXILE.

As in nature there is no calm more profound than the silence which succeeds the storm, so in humanity the wearying strife of passion—the tempests which rend the heart—the mad desires which take the reason prisoner—the struggles, which, from their intensity, exhaust its energies—are generally, if not invariably, followed by repose and self-possession—a repose so deep and still, that it would seem as if the soul, worn and tired with the contest, retired within itself, to gather fresh strength in solitude and contemplation.

The look of anguish and despair which Meenan Hafaz cast upon Ellen, as they removed him from the library, was the last indication which the young Indian permitted to escape him till he found himself alone in his prison.

"Thus ends my dream of life!" he murmured; "love! ambition! the career of usefulness and honor—all that men prize—wrecked—for ever wrecked—on the mad sea of passion! Do I regret the past? No! Let fools, or cowards who fear to grapple with their destiny, regret: it is the most useless feeling of the heart; with me it shall be the last! I am of iron nerve and mould! I will meet the phantom death face to face—nor shrink at its ghastly terrors! Meet it! but not as my enemies expect! No!" he added, proudly; "the ruffian hand of the executioner shall never pollute my person with his touch! My hated rival shall not see me on the scaffold! Meenan Hafaz shall have an execution no less illustrious than himself!"

Full of his purpose of self-destruction, he cast his eyes around to contemplate the means: he had neither knife nor weapon upon his person—those who had taken him having carefully removed every instrument by which he could commit suicide. Nothing remained to him but his pocket-book, filled with bank-notes to an enormous amount, and the matchless gem—his mother the Begum's parting gift—an heirloom of her race—upon his finger.

He contemplated them for some moments in silence. He would have given them all—notes and gem—for a weapon—a blade to reach the secret seat of life—to enable him to master the bitter destiny which overshadowed him.

Whilst the young Indian was indulging in these melancholy fancies, Joe Beans, the sexton, Red Ralph, and the constable, were keeping watch in the chamber of the belfry below.

"Hark," said Joe Beans, after listening to the step of the prisoner above, "how impatiently he measures the old planks! How his proud spirit must feel like a caged tiger's, to be thus cooped up! I'd rather be simple Joe Beans, with a clear conscience, than the rich Meenan Hafaz!"

"True," said the sexton; "especially with the prospect which he has before him—prison—trial—death!"

"Do ye think they'll hang him?" demanded the boy.

"Little doubt of that!" observed the constable; I heard Colonel Butler and Lawyer Elworthy say it would go hard with him."

"But he be mortal rich!" added Ralph.

"What of that?"

"What o' that, master constable!" repeated the lad; "thee beest a 'cute chap, but I bean't a fool—be I, Joe?"

"Certainly not," answered the young man, in whose opinion the intelligence of the uncouth speaker had risen fifty per cent. since his adventure with the Rev. Mr. Twinetext in the park.

"Well, then," continued Ralph, "I never knewed a man hanged who had a power of gold. Rich men can do anything with justice, I be thinking! They be like the traps I used to set in Remnant's fields at Mortlake: they *coached* the wrens, linnets, and poor little sparrows; but the *big birds* a'most allays contrived to get out. Chap up stairs," added the boy, with a cunning look, "be a big bird, I reckon!"

His hearers could not avoid smiling at the observation of the lad, which was not without a certain amount of shrewdness. The "big birds"—as he quaintly termed the rich criminals—somehow or another—with all our boasted equality and love of justice in England—frequently contrive to escape.

A loud knocking was heard at the door of the belfry. Joe Beans directed Red Ralph to ascertain who it was, but by no means to admit any one.

"It be all right!" said the boy, proud of the confidence reposed in him; "if they want to come in, they mun get through the keyhole for I!"

The next moment his heavy footsteps were heard descending the stairs which communicated with the lower part of the tower.

"It be a woman," observed the constable, listening to the voice of the speaker.

"Then there be mischief afoot," said the sexton, who was a confirmed old bachelor: an opinion in which Joe could not bring himself to coincide. Perhaps he thought of Susan.

"Well, Ralph," said the young man, as the messenger re-appeared, with a broad grin upon his countenance, "who is it?"

"Black 'ooman," replied the lad; "she be sitting and crying like a good un! The rain be pelting on her. She'll be like a drowned rat afore mornin'!"

"Before morning?"

"Ees," said the urchin; "she swears she won't stir till she has seen the Indian chap up stairs."

The night was indeed a wild one—for the heavens had become suddenly charged with clouds dark as the fate of Zara's foster-son. Not a star was to be seen, and the watery deluge descended in large drops, whose heavy, monotonous splashes were only in-

terrupted by occasional gusts of wind, which broke with a wailing sound against the buttresses of the old church tower, at whose base the ayah had seated herself in sullen, fixed despair. She heeded it not—felt it not; every thought and feeling was absorbed in the danger of her idol Meeran.

"Poor thing!" said Joe, as from the window of the belfry he gazed upon her; "she be faithful to the last!"

"And we must be faithful, too!" dryly observed the sexton.

Without seeming to notice the observation, the young man descended: his heart was touched by her fidelity and sorrow.

"I'll see her!" he thought; "she is a helpless woman, in a foreign land, and a kind word may cheer her; she be a poor ignorant heathen, and should not be judged like one of us! What would you?" he said, as he unbarred the door of the belfry. "Return home, Zara, or to Miss Ellen, at the rectory: she has a kind, good heart, and ——"

"Home!" repeated the ayah, interrupting him; "my home is here—here, with my foster-son! I could have abandoned him in prosperity and happiness—but never in misfortune! I know," she added, passionately, "that my feelings, thoughts, and language appear strange to you—my skin, too, is not of your colour; but my heart is human as your own! Let me see him! I have betrayed him—delivered him to his enemies—to shame and death, perhaps; but I must see him—I cannot die without his forgiveness!"

"Die!" said Joe, who began to feel his resolution giving way at her passionate burst of sorrow. "There be no fear of that: Miss Ellen will take care of thee!"

"I shall soon be beyond her care!" exclaimed the Indian woman. "All I ask is, let me behold my foster-son!"

"Impossible!" said Joe, trying to look resolute; "it is forbidden!"

"There is nothing impossible to a love like mine!" observed the suppliant.

"But I am trusted!"

"And was I not trusted?" exclaimed the ayah, passionately; "but I yielded to the voice of my heart—the promptings of its pity! To save Ellen, I betrayed the noble boy I nurtured at my breast; who loved me—mean and worthless as I am—who loved me like a son! Man!" she added, casting herself at his feet, "as you were born of woman, have pity on a woman's sufferings! You cannot tell the undying devotion of the Indian nurse for those she has reared! I saved Ellen—saved her for him you call your friend! All I ask in return is to see, to speak for a few moments with him whose trust I have betrayed—whose heart I have broken!"

"See him!" repeated Joe, in a tone which showed that he was deliberating with himself. "Alone, I suppose?"

"Alone, or in the presence of others, imports but little," replied Zara, "so that I see him!"

"And thee shalt see him!" said the

young man, firmly, "in spite of what constable and sexton may say!"

The eyes of the suppliant flashed for an instant with intense brilliancy; the next they were calm and subdued. Her countenance reminded Joe of a thunder-cloud suddenly illuminated by the summer lightning's flash, and then dark again.

"Follow me," he said; "I will bring you to the presence of Meeran Hafaz."

Despite the remonstrance of his two companions, he kept his word. As a matter of precaution, however, they insisted not only on accompanying her and being present at the interview, but that she should be searched. Zara submitted to the humiliating conditions with an air of scorn and indifference. Not a weapon, drug, or instrument of any kind could be found upon her. To all appearance she was unarmed. Even Ralph, who stood watching every movement, detected nothing to excite his suspicion.

"I hope you are satisfied?" said Joe Beans, addressing the constable and sexton.

"I don't know that I am!" replied the latter, shaking his gray head, with a forboding air; "there be always a woman concerned when mischief is afloat!"

With this ungallant observation, all further opposition ceased, and the party mounted the stairs which led to the chamber above. No sooner had the constable unlocked the door, than Zara precipitated herself into the apartment, and, sinking on her knees, with her hands crossed upon her bosom, remained motionless as a statue at the feet of her foster-son.

The object of the men in accompanying her was to prevent the conveying of any instrument of self-destruction, or attempt to escape; they had no wish to overhear any conversation that might pass between them. They contented themselves, therefore, by withdrawing to one side of the room, and watching them in silence.

"Zara," said the prisoner, "whence this grief? I should have thought to see your face all smiles! Success does not generally deck itself in tears!"

"Success!" repeated the ayah.

"Ay!" continued the young Indian, calmly; "when the serpent glides towards the couch of the sleeper—who like a fool has cherished it—and stings the confiding fool to death, some may call it *treachery*—but the world is wiser, Zara—the world names it *success!* Come you," he added, bitterly, "to witness my degradation?—to report to Ellen and the rival to whom you sold me, the despair and impotent regrets of Meeran Hafaz?"

The nurse rose slowly from her knees. There was an air of dignity in her manner which no acting could assume.

"Shall I tell you," she said, "what brought me here? Meeran, *I came to die with you!*"

"*Die with me!*" exclaimed her foster-son; "with me! Zara, repeat those words; for they imply the death of *both!*—the throwing off this coil of flesh—disappoint-

ing the scaffold of its prey—my enemies of their triumph!"

"And didst thou think," said the Indian woman, in a reproachful tone, "that I could desert thee! They searched me, Meeran, when, by my prayers, tears, and abject supplication, I prevailed upon these accursed gaolers to admit me to your sight; but they found neither steel nor drug upon my person; and yet I am armed—armed with a means of death as certain as the serpent's fang! The fools saw it, but knew it not."

As she spoke, the ayah raised her hand so that the light from the lamp suspended from the centre of the vaulted roof fell directly upon it. The eyes of the captive sparkled, as he detected upon the thumb-nail of his nurse a dark and almost purple stain.

It was the ourari poison—the most subtle known: so deadly are its effects, that the Indians who prepare it scarcely ever employ any other weapon than a reed dipped in the deadly juice. It is a well-known fact, that they frequently destroy their enemies by inflicting a slight scratch with the thumb-nail, which they have previously stained with it. The wound causes almost instant death.

"The ourari?" he said.

"E'en so!"

"Zara," exclaimed the young man, I forgive thee all, for this one triumph over my rival, the scoffing world, and Ellen's hate! The noblest blood of India," he added, proudly, "must not be shed like a common felon's.

"Never!" muttered the ayah; "never!"

"In this land I have none to regret me," he added, "save one!"

"You forget, Meeran," said Zara, reproachfully, "that she dies with you!"

This conversation having taken place in Hindostanee, as a matter of course, was perfectly unintelligible to Joe Beans and his companions, who were far from suspecting its purport. When the nurse raised her arm to expose the poison, Red Ralph asked of Joe, in a whisper, if black woman was *a-goin'* to conjure.

"Silence!" said the young man; "bad as they have been, let us not insult them!"

"I don't want to *sult* 'em," replied the boy, sullenly. "I only want to see un hanged!"

"Farewell, world!" said the young Indian, with a sigh; "my spirit longs for freedom! I have struggled with destiny, but the iron ruler of the world has proved too strong for me! I have lost the battle, but I will not lament it! Now, Zara," he added, "thine must be the office of the sacrificing priest of old! The altar is ready and the victim willing!"

"I cannot, Meeran," said his nurse, with a passionate burst of grief—"I cannot bring sorrow to your widowed mother's heart, which pines for your return, and day by day will count the hours with anxious hope! I cannot destroy the child I reared, loved, honoured, and betrayed!"

"Would you rather see me upon the scaffold?" calmly demanded her foster-son. Zara shuddered.

"In the hands of the hangman?"

"Have pity!" she sobbed.

"The cord—the vile, degrading cord," he added, "round my neck—the gaze of the yelling mob—my rival looking on the while?"

"Never!" exclaimed the Indian woman, starting like a roused lioness from the crouching posture into which she had fallen. "Tis past—the weakness has passed, and my resolution is of steel—steel!"

"We must be brief," said Meeraan; "those who watch me begin to cast suspicious glances on our interview! Zara," he added, "in thy arms my infant years first slumbered—in thy arms I will sink to my last sleep—what shouldst thou fear?"

"For myself, nothing!"

"It will soon be daylight!" said Joe Beans, who began to feel a vague uneasiness at the length of the interview, although he did not understand a word of what was uttered. "It is time to depart!"

Zara regarded him with a look so vindictive, that the honest fellow gave an involuntary shudder. She looked around as if she anticipated that some means would be found to avoid the dreadful extremity for which she came prepared.

"Is this your courage?" said Meeraan, calmly.

"Farewell!" she cried; at the same moment opening her arms to receive him; "but not for ever! My spirit will take its flight with thine!"

One instant—and only one—the devoted woman strained him to her breast; then inflicted with her nail a slight scratch upon his neck, directly beneath the ear.

"They are a long time a-huggin'!" observed Red Ralph.

"You must leave!" said the constable.

"I am ready," replied the ayah; "but your prisoner has escaped you!"

"Escaped?"

"Ay! he is dead!"

She opened her arms, and the body of Meeraan Hafaz slid gently to her feet.

"What be this?" demanded the horror-stricken Joe.

"I told 'ee she wor *a-goin'* to conjure!" whispered Red Ralph, pulling him by the skirt of the coat.

"It means," exclaimed Zara, in a tone of mingled despair and triumph, "that your victim has escaped you—that the proud spirit and warm heart are both at rest!—Advance not," she added, passionately; "no hand but mine must touch his sad remains!"

"A surgeon—run for a surgeon!" said the constable.

"For Colonel Butler!" added the sexton.

"Fools!" replied the ayah; "as well try to unite the severed flower unto its parent stem! He has escaped your laws—escaped your justice! The malice of his enemies will not be gratified by witnessing the degradation and the shame of the descend-

ant of a line of princes! He is cold—cold as my heart!"

Overwhelmed with sorrow, the Indian woman seated herself upon the floor of the prison; and, with a mother's tenderness, began to arrange the limbs of her foster-son. There was a proud smile upon the half-opened lips of Meeran, as if his last thought—his last feeling—had been of triumph, rather than defeat.

"Let us leave her!" said Joe Beans, mournfully; she cannot escape. Bad as he was, he has one to sorrow for him!"

His companions had been too much puzzled by the manner of their prisoner's death, to venture to lay hands upon the ayah, whom they regarded with a mysterious dread. To their superstitious imagination, she seemed invested with supernatural powers. They carefully closed the door upon her, and descended to the chamber below, leaving Zara alone with the dead.

"I told 'ee," said Red Ralph, as soon as they were seated, "that black 'ooman wor a-goin' to conjure! There'll be only t' old un," he added, in a tone of disappointment, "to hang, arter all!"

CHAPTER XLVIII.

And looking into eyes where, blue
And beautiful, like skies seen through
The sleeping wave, for me there shone
A heaven more worshipped than mine own.
MOORE'S LOVES OF THE ANGELS.

THOSE who have loved—and dull indeed has their existence been who have never experienced the absorbing, elevating passion—will imagine far better than we can describe the joy of Henry Ashton, at once more pouring forth his gushing feelings, the melodies of the young heart, into the willing ear of Ellen. The past—the cruel past—which had so severely tried them, appeared like some hideous dream—a cloud which for a moment had obscured the horizon of their happiness, then left it bright again. What brilliant prospects of the future did he not draw, as, with his arm encircling her yielding waist, they wandered once more, side by side, in the rectory garden.

As the tender flower whose delicate leaves have been weighed down by the dank dews of night, expands again at the first kiss of morning, so did the soul of the long-persecuted girl shake off the icy feeling—the dark forebodings and hopeless agony—which had oppressed it. So perfect did her present joy appear by the contrast, that more than once she mentally asked herself if it were real, and raised her timid glances till they encountered the ardent gaze of her lover, fixed upon her with manly pride and affection—a gaze which covered her still pale cheek with roseate blushes, or recalled to her lips

A smile as pure as e'er was given
By a soul redeemed, just winged for heaven.

If Ellen's heart tasted this deep, calm happiness—a happiness which virtue only

knows—what were the transports of our hero? He felt like some captive who had passed hopeless years in a dark, solitary dungeon, restored to light and sunshine; or the shipwrecked mariner, who finds himself cast upon his native shore, in sight of home, wife, children, friends, instead of the bleak and unknown coast his terrors painted to him.

This feeling of happiness was not confined to the lovers alone. From the windows of the library, which overlooked the garden, the worthy rector saw and blessed them. Several times he rose from his great easy chair to assure himself the scene was real: it was the only recompense he required for his fatigues, and the interest he had taken in their welfare—his heart would not deny him that.

"She is speaking of her uncle," he said, as he observed his adopted son kiss a tear from the eye-lid of his ward. "If it is permitted to the dead to watch over those they love on the earth, how must his good and noble spirit rejoice at witnessing the happiness he has created!"

So saying, he took up a volume of divinity, and began to read. But it would not do: his thoughts insensibly wandered to the garden, and his eyes from the page of the erudite writer to the window from which the graceful forms of the lovers were visible. The sight of them was like a gleam of sunshine to his old heart.

Henry and Ellen had much to communicate to each other. They wept tears of tender admiration and regret at the death of the noble, devoted Walter Mowbray, whom our hero persisted in regarding as the lost heir of his benefactor; a conviction which was strengthened when they reflected on the coldness, the utter want of heart, which had existed between the gallant youth and the scheming, hollow man who styled himself his father. The supposition was not an unnatural or improbable one; for who, from such a stem, would look for such a flower.

"How proud his father would have been of him!" observed Henry, with a deep-drawn sigh. "He had the qualities to win the love of all who knew him. There is one fair girl," he added, "fair and good almost as yourself, to whom life is now a blank!"

He alluded to Therese Colonna.

"I shall never meet with such a friend again!" he continued, with a sigh.

"Not as gifted, perhaps—not blessed with a mind like his, which, pure and tranquil as the lake embosomed in some verdant dell, reflected back the image, the thoughts and feelings, the noble dreams and aspirations of your own nature, Henry!" answered the fair girl; "but one as true, as faithful, you at least possess!"

Her lover regarded her for an instant with an inquiring glance.

"Joe Beans—poor faithful Joe!" she added.

"True!" replied our hero. "I was ungrateful to forget him. He was the com-

panion of my childhood, Ellen ; the depository of my boyhood's thoughts and feelings. He is true as the impulse is to nature—but not like Walter. There was a refinement in his soul which polished all who came in contact with it!"

Whilst they were thus conversing, the honest rustic had been slowly approaching the house. His heart failed him at the sight of our hero, whom he began to look up to with a vague sentiment of respect and dread. The poor fellow felt that something, he knew not what, had drawn a yet stronger line of demarcation between them. He had lost his confidence in himself—*their minds were no longer equal.*

To do Henry Ashton justice, he did not perceive it.

As Joe approached the spot where the lovers were standing, they were both struck by the subdued and humble air of the poor fellow. It was like that of a faithful hound at fault, expecting to be chidden.

By a simultaneous movement they both extended their hands toward him, but the heart of Joe was too full to take them.

"I want to speak with thee, Master Harry, a bit," he said, at the same time doffing his cap, with rustic gallantry, to the young lady.

"In good time, Joe! we were just speaking of you and your fidelity!"

"Of me?" repeated his friend ; and his eyes sparkled with delight at the thought of being remembered by them at such a moment—but instantly became clouded again, as he reflected that he was the bearer of what might possibly prove disagreeable intelligence.

"But I bean't faithful," he said ; "I have broken trust!"

"Broken trust!" repeated our hero ; "surely you have not suffered yourself to be prevailed on to release—no, no—I wrong you in entertaining such a supposition even for an instant! Your prisoner is—"

"Still in the belfry tower," interrupted the young man, at the same time giving him a look which in former days used to be a signal between them when planning some boyish frolic in presence of the worthy farmer and his dame. Henry understood it in an instant, and, after leading Ellen to a seat, he returned to the spot where the speaker was standing.

"Now, Joe," he said, "what has occurred?"

"Your rival, Master Harry, is dead!"

"Dead?"

"It wor all my fault—indeed it wor!" exclaimed the rustic. "Constable, sexton, Ralph and I watched him all night in the old tower—the night wor a rough one!"

"But the prisoner—the prisoner?" impatiently demanded our hero.

"The Indian woman came, and made such a piteous moaning, and looked so miserable, like—entreated in such humble words to be permitted to see her foster-son, I think she called him—that somehow I could not refuse her. The fault wor all mine," he added ; "every bit on it mine—

so you mun only blame me, Master Harry!"

"I do not blame you," replied his hearer, gravely ; "though perhaps I ought to have expected more caution from you!"

"I wor cautious," continued his friend ; "before I let her into the tower, we searched her : not a knife, or cord, or any means of mischief could we discover ; besides, we wor present all the time they were together?"

"And yet you say he is dead?"

"Can't understand it," said Joe ; I neither saw blow nor weapon, and yet he is dead! The only mark is a small scratch upon his neck, which must have been made by the black devil's nail ; for I can take my oath she had no instrument to do it with—not even a bodkin!"

Our hero suddenly recollecting that the Ottomac Indians often poison the thumbnail with the juice of the ourari, the slightest scratch of which causes death. Raleigh, who mentions it, calls it ourari ; from the experiments of Verehan and Munster, it would appear that it does not kill by mere external application, but only when absorbed by living animal substance, the continuity of which has been severed ; neither does it belong to the class of tetanic poisons : its action destroys the muscular power, and so causes death, although the involuntary function of the heart still continues.

Like most women of the East, he knew the ayah to be well skilled in poisons, and doubted not but he had rightly guessed the means she had employed to save her foster-son from an ignominious death.

"Heaven forbid, Joe," he said, extending his hand, "that I should blame you for listening to the pleadings of humanity—the voice of your own heart! No precautions could have prevented—no knowledge, such as you possess, could have forewarned you ; he is dead, the memory of his evil deeds dies with him!"

"And you forgive me?"

"I have nothing to forgive—human resentment ceases at the grave!"

These few words restored Joe Beans to his self-respect, and removed a weight from off his heart ; never in his life had his intelligence been so completely at fault as in the death of Meeran Hafaz. In his simplicity he was inclined to attribute it to magic.

"And does thee understand it, Master Harry?"

"I comprehend it," was the reply.

"Egad, I believe thee knowest everything! Greek, after all, mun be a rare thing!"

Like the good farmer and his dame, the honest fellow attributed the mental superiority, and whatever else he could not understand in the conduct of our hero, to his having studied Greek with the rector.

"You had better see Dr. Orme," continued Henry Ashton ; "you will find him in the library ; in a few moments I will join you!"

Joe had learned from his own love passages a certain amount of tact, and felt that his presence was no longer desirable. He therefore left his young master to break the intelligence to Ellen, and, with a lighter heart than he brought with him, directed his way towards the house.

As the young man advanced to the spot where he had left the orphan, he saw from her anxious look that she half-divined the intelligence. Taking her hand in his, he gazed fondly upon her features, and whispered in her ear :

"When you pray, Ellen, there is one who will have need of intercession at the throne of mercy ; and whose lips so likely to be heard as yours, whom his mad passions have bereaved of a revered parent."

"Meeran," she faltered, "dying?"

Her lover remained silent.

"Dead?"

He gently kissed away the tear that accompanied the word. Had the generous spirit of her murdered uncle beheld it, it would have smiled upon the pearly drop—pure as that which angels are supposed to shed, when they witness the errors and sufferings of poor humanity.

"Heaven pardon him!" she said ; "he has sorely tried my heart!"

Her lover struggled for a moment with his feelings, but the nobler impulse of his nature prevailed ; and he pronounced "Amen" to the prayer, as he led her towards the rectory.

Although much shocked, Dr. Orme was not surprised at the intelligence of the savage fidelity of the Indian nurse, and the death of Meeran Hafaz. In his long life of retirement, books had not been the only objects of his study—he had learned to analyse and peruse that more mysterious page, the human heart.

A note was immediately dispatched to inform Colonel Butler of what had occurred, and requesting that active magistrate to take the necessary steps.

That same day a letter arrived from the Duchess of Devonshire, informing our hero that Lady Mowbray and herself arrived two days previously in London. It added, that the unhappy victim of so much treachery and deceit bore up against the shock of her husband's death with more firmness than could have been expected from her bruised and tortured spirit ; one hope alone sustained it—that of again embracing her son.

How strong, how beautiful is the feeling of maternity in the breast of women! Age cannot wither it—it dawns in the heart of the young mother with the first smile of her infant, and expires only with the life o'er which it spreads a charm.

On the return to the rectory, Dr. Orme referred to the letter of the duchess. He had weighed the affair in his mind, and decided that Lady Mowbray ought at once to take up her abode at the abbey—and by such a step challenge the opinion and inquiry of the world.

"Right, sir!" said his adopted son ; "you are always right!"

"I am glad you think so!" said the rector, with a smile ; "since my next advice may interfere with your wishes ; I am certain that it will with your feelings."

"With mine, sir?"

"Yes ; you must start at once for London : duty, affection to the living and the dead, demand the sacrifice—which, painful as it is, I am certain you will make. I will give orders to place Carrow in a fit state to receive her."

Henry looked towards Ellen, as if to read in her eyes the answer he should give.

"Go!" she whispered ; and the tremulous sound of her voice and slight quiver of her lip showed how deeply she felt the sacrifice. "Not even the shadow of a reproach must rest upon our hearts! Go, Henry—I will pray for your return!"

Honour, gratitude, duty, all impelled him ; yet it was not till after a severe struggle that he decided upon obeying the united wishes of the rector and the orphan. After such an absence—so many sufferings—it seemed hard to part. True, the image of Meeran no longer rose like an ill-omened shadow between him and his affianced bride ; But love is the most ingenious of tormentors : it conjures a thousand ills and dangers when separated from the object of its choice.

"I will go!" he said, with a deep-drawn sigh ; "but never till this hour did the path of duty appear so rugged and so strewed with thorns."

It was arranged that the speaker should start the following morning, and accompany Lady Mowbray and the duchess back to Carrow.

When the faithful housekeeper heard of the intended visit of the wife of her late master to the abbey, she declared that, let who would receive her, she would not set a foot within the walls while she remained. It was not till after a long explanation from Dr. Orme that she consented to change her resolution. Like the rest of the world, she deemed Lady Mowbray the guilty, not the deceived and outraged wife of her late venerated master.

There was one person—and one alone—to whom the absence of Henry Ashton was a source of relief—the Khan : it postponed the meeting and the explanation he had so many causes to dread.

When our hero arrived in London, he found that Colonel Mowbray had made application to the Chancellor to recover the guardianship of Ellen, and had instructed his solicitor to commence proceedings touching the estates of his late brother. The will was to be disputed upon the grounds of insanity and undue influence. Under these circumstances, he wrote, by the advice of the duchess, to request the presence of the rector and Ellen.

The trials of the lovers were not over yet.

When Joe Beans returned to the prison-chamber in the belfry tower of Carrow Church, he found the ayah, who had carefully arranged the body of Meeran Hafaz,

crouching like a thing of sorrow at the head of the corse. Her tears—and it was no slight anguish which could draw them from her iron nature—fell fast upon the features of her foster-son, which even in death retained their characteristic expression of pride and resolution.

The heart of the poor fellow smote him, as he saw the desolation of the Indian woman in a strange land. He was touched, too, by her fidelity, and began to offer well-meant expressions of consolation and pity.

"Pity!" replied Zara, with fearful calmness; "think you I live for pity?"

"For repentance, I hope!" replied the sexton, who, with the constable and Red Ralph, had remained during the absence of Joe, to watch.

"Could repentance wash out the past—recall the life-blood to his cheeks—the hope to his young heart—I would repent—endure through all eternity the fakir's living death, and bless my bed of torture—but that cannot be! He is dead!" she added, wildly; "the pride of his mother's heart—the light of these sad eyes—with none to weep for him—none to mourn, or honour his remains, except the Indian nurse!"

"What did 'ee kill un for?" demanded Ralph.

The ayah disdained reply—for she felt that her reasons were past their comprehension. But she cast a glance upon the forward boy, which caused him involuntarily to retreat behind his companions—it resembled that of roused tigress.

"Where is the man?" she asked, addressing herself to Joe Beans, "who called himself the friend of my poor boy—who shared his wealth—the subtle plotter—the prudent devil who contrived this mischief?"

"Mean you Colonel Mowbray?" said the rustic.

"Are there two such men?" replied the ayah, bitterly.

"He has started for London."

"No matter!" she answered; "he cannot escape his doom! Why should I think of him, when the ashes of the last descendant of India's princes require my care? I must forth," she said, starting to her feet with sudden determination, "to prepare the balm and spices!"

"You cannot leave!" exclaimed the constable, barring the passage between her and the door.

Zara smiled contemptuously, and extended her hand.

"You are my prisoner—at least till the inquest is over, and the surgeons have examined the body! In my mind, Master Chettleborough," he added, addressing the sexton, "it beant a natural death! There be something like witchcraft in it!"

At the allusion to what she considered the profanation of the body of her foster-son, Zara forgot her revengeful purpose, which, after all, would but have fallen on a poor, simple fellow who was but performing his duty.

"Never," she murmured to herself—"never shall the hand of the scorner

touch it! Zara will 'balk their impotent malice!'

As the resolution formed in her brain, she cast her eyes around the chamber to consider the means of accomplishing her purpose. It was taken in an instant.

"When will this thing take place?" she demanded.

"Most likely to-morrow, before the crowner's quest," replied the sexton.

This was enough: she had the night before her—sufficient time to mature her plans.

"And now," she said, addressing Joe Beans, "I have a favor to request—the last I shall ever ask!"

The young man looked doubtfully. He remembered how she had baffled his vigilance the preceding night.

"It will not cost you much," she continued, "to grant it. I sue because I have no wish to command it."

"Command it,

"Ay, command it!" she repeated. "I am armed with that your coward natures shrink from—death! Leave me with the dead. I would watch the remains of him I nurtured at my breast—perform the last rites due to his memory and his race! The first step which for six hours shall cross this threshold, shall never re-cross it living! Fools!" she added, seeing that they were still undecided whether to refuse or grant her wish; "have you so soon forgotten the fate of him you were set on to guard!"

"She beant no human thing!" observed the sexton, with a shudder. "I have been familiar with the grave all my life, but this woman is more terrible than the grave!"

The constable was of the same opinion, and both declared that they would keep watch in the chamber below; but that no inducement should prevail on them to remain in the same place with the corpse of the young Indian and its terrible guardian.

"Cowards!" exclaimed Joe, "then I must remain alone!"

"Doan't 'ee, Mr. Beans! doan't 'ee!" said Red Ralph, pulling him by the skirt of his shooting coat. "I told 'ee when I first see'd her at Cromwell House, that the black 'ooman wor no good!"

The deliberations of the speakers were broken in upon by a loud knocking at the lower door of the belfry. All four descended to ascertain the cause, leaving the ayah alone with the body of Meeran. No sooner was the Indian woman disengaged of their presence, than she raised the remains in her arms as tenderly as a mother would have lifted the corpse of her first-born child, and, with a strength few would have imagined her capable of exercising, carried it up the ladder which communicated with the bell-chamber above. As soon as she had accomplished this she drew the heavy ladder after her, and let down the trap-door—a precaution by which all communication was sundered between the upper and lower parts of the belfry tower.

The bell-chamber, like most similar places in country churches in England, had for years been used as a receptacle for the various odds and ends—such as worn-out grave-planks, broken pew-panels, and old hassocks—which accumulate with time. With these Zara hastily constructed a species of pyre between the massive oaken beams which supported the great bell at Carrow. When, after considerable labor, she had accomplished her purpose, she placed the inanimate remains of her foster-son upon the pile, and, loosening the veil which hung at the back of her head, prepared to spread it as a covering over him.

"Not yet!" she sobbed; "not yet! One moment to human love—to human weakness! So," she said, apostrophizing the corpse, "they would profane thy remains—like the ravenous jackal, insult the dead! Never! never! Farewell," she added, "if there be a land in which the spirits, freed from the trammels of the flesh, meet and commune, thy nurse shall soon rejoin thee! Thy funeral pile shall have a living victim! If Zara betrayed, she at least will perish with thee!"

With these words she leant over the dead and imprinted a kiss on the pale but still haughty brow of Meoran Hafaz. Then, taking up two pieces of wood, which she had purposely selected she began rapidly to rub them together, in the Indian fashion, in order to procure fire wherewith to consummate the sacrifice. Although the process was a tedious one, her strength never flagged. The dry wood began slowly at last to smoke and emit faint sparks—which the ayah no sooner perceived than she commenced the death-song, which she continued to sing till they burst into a bright blaze.

"At last!" she exclaimed with a smile of triumph; "at last!"

Without a moment's hesitation, or betrayal of weakness, she firmly mounted the pile she had so laboriously reared, and, taking the head of Meoran into her lap, applied the torch. The wood being for the most part rotten and extremely dry, it was soon in a blaze.

"Burn!" she said, as she continued to fan it with her hands, "till of the living and the dead no vestige shall remain save their mingled ashes! Pride of my soul! light of my eyes!" she continued, addressing the body; "thy nurse has not strewed thy pile with the precious spices and the balm of India; but it shall yield a more costly perfume than rajah's pyre ever gave—the incense of a devoted, faithful heart!"

Voces were heard below, entreating her to descend—to let down the ladder. They were those of Colonel Butler, Joe Beans, and the sexton, who from the churchyard had witnessed the smoke and flames issuing through the boarded windows of the bell-chamber. Zara heeded them not, but with a calm air, unmoved by the scorching flames which had already enveloped her person, continued her lament over the remains of her foster-son, till her voice

became choked. Even then her eyes continued to gaze upon him. The last look which fell upon the features of Meoran Hafaz was one of love, devotion, and agony.

Long ere the villagers could arrive with assistance, the desperate act was accomplished. Both were ashes!

CHAPTER XLIX.

Revenge—the attribute of gods. They stamped it With their great image on our natures.

VENICE PRESERVED.

LIKE many desperate gamesters, who have lost and are bankrupts alike in character and fortune, Colonel Mowbray, by the advice of his better half—alas! that a bad, evil-minded woman should be termed the better half of man—resolved to risk everything upon a last stake. Although the guardianship of Ellen was indisputably vested in Dr. Orme, his mode of exercising it had violated a standing order of the Chancellor's, who was one of the greatest formalists that ever sat upon the woolsack, and was likely to decree that the orphan should be restored to the care of the guardian he had appointed, before he would consent to hear any petition upon the subject. The precious pair both calculated that if they could obtain possession of the person of their victim only for a day, they might make what terms they pleased with the rector and her friends; added to which there were the law's delays, and the chapter of accidents that might arise.

The return of Lady Mowbray to England promised to be a source of greater embarrassment to her unworthy brother-in-law than even the will of Sir William or the guardianship of his niece.

Whilst proceedings were pending, the time approached for the trial of Will Sider— and Henry and the rector were compelled to leave for Norwich, as their evidence would be required on the occasion; but this time our hero left the object of his affection with a less saddened spirit: he left her an inmate of Devonshire House, under the protection of the generous duchess, and the affectionate care of the widowed Lady Mowbray, around whose heart the orphan had already twined herself.

For awhile we must leave them, and pursue the current of our narrative.

We feel assured that our readers have not forgotten Mat Cows, the hangman, whom we left slow, recovering from the effects of the very severe injuries he had received on the night of the warrenor's escape from Newgate. Although neither a very amiable nor interesting personage, Mat stands out in relief, like a streak of red light in one of Martin's strangely fascinating pictures—the very terror which he inspires invests him with a dark and dreamy interest.

"Well, Mat," said one of the keepers—the same who had been so cleverly imposed

upon by the liberality and pretended piety of old Davids—"have you heard the news?"

"Is he taken?" demanded the vindictive little wretch, raising himself with difficulty upon one arm from the bed in the infirmary where he was lying.

The turnkey nodded in the affirmative.

"Ha!" exclaimed Mat, with a chuckling laugh, which sounded something between the hiss of a serpent and the whine of the hyena. "I was sure he would be—for I have dreamed of it every night; and my dreams generally come true. When will he be back?"

"Not at all!"

"Not at all!" repeated the executioner, with a look of disappointment; "what do you mean? They can never intend to let such a villain escape: he has half murdered me, robbed me, compelled me to pay a substitute to perform my duty! Well, well," he added; "I tell you that the crown itself won't be safe, if they don't protect the hangman!"

"I believe you," said the gaoler, who was not singular in his opinion—since most of the judges of the land shared it with him.

"Do speak out!" continued Mat, with impatience, which was displayed more particularly in the clutching and opening of his hands than by word or look. "I can't bear suspense—it's worse than certainty! Ask any of my subjects," he added, "if they don't find their minds much more comfortable after they are condemned than whilst they are kept in doubt."

"Well, then," continued his visitor, "I will tell you. Notice has come to the governor, from the Home Office, that Will Sideler, the prisoner who lately escaped from Newgate, has been retaken, and committed to Norwich Castle by the magistrates, to take his trial for the murder of a Sir William Mowbray. So, you see, as he was only here upon a charge of attempted murder, and they have got him upon one for a murder actually committed, they have a right to keep him!"

"Then he won't be brought back to Newgate?"

"No!"

"Then I will go to him!" exclaimed Mat, with a look of dogged determination. "I once officiated for Lane"—the name of his brother executioner at Norwich. "One good turn deserves another! He must return the compliment."

"What do you mean?" demanded his visitor.

"That I should not rest in my bed," replied Mat Cowls, savagely, "if any one else were to hang him!"

"But you are ill!"

"I shall soon be better!" growled the ruffian. "I feel I shall: the news you have brought me has done me more good than all the doctor's stuff I have taken!"

"Don't be foolish, Mat!" said his visitor; "revenge is a luxury which poor men can't afford!"

"Can't they!" chuckled the hangman, with a cynical smile; and he thought upon his wife and her paramour; "somehow they do contrive it! When does the trial take place?"

"In ten days!"

"And who tries him?"

"Lord Chief Justice Shark."

"Then he is sure to hang!" exclaimed Mat, with savage joy. "I would not give a rope's end for his chance of escape! I have often watched the old man in court—noticed the workings of his brows, and the twinkle of his cold, gray eyes—as he has seen the prisoner entangled deeper and deeper in the meshes of the law. It's my belief," he added, "that if he had not been made a judge, he would have put up for hangman!"

The official laughed heartily at the graphic description of the distinguished personage of whom they were speaking, who was known amongst his brethren of the *court* by the *soubriquet* of the "Hanging Judge!"

Mat Cowls kept his word. Five days before the opening of the assizes, he started by waggon for Norwich. Little did his fellow-travellers dream that the decrepit quiet little man, who whiled away the tedious hours of the journey by merry tales and jests, was the dreaded finisher of the law—the being to whom outraged society delegates the awful privilege of taking the forfeit life of his fellow-creatures!

Although the court-house, as may be supposed from the interest created throughout the county by the murder of Sir William Mowbray, was densely crowded, the executioner contrived to find a seat in one of the galleries, in a direct line with the felons' dock. He had come with the evident intention of enjoying himself; for in the little basket beside him were a paper of sandwiches, and a bottle of his favourite beverage—gin and water. Could he have added a pipe, his felicity would have been complete.

Johnson, the gaoler, and his assistants, brought the prisoners into the dock several minutes before the judge had taken his seat upon the bench, with the very proper feeling of gratifying the public curiosity by sight of them.

Sideler—upon whom every eye was fixed the instant he made his appearance—looked round the court with a bold, hardened stare. The confidence of his lawyer had given him hope: the man of law did not think it probable that a jury would be found to condemn him on no other evidence than that of poor old Martin, whose mind at times was still apt to wander, and whom he had instructed counsel to treat as a madman. The only awkward circumstance was the prisoner's confession; but as that extended no further than acknowledging that Meera Hafaz had tempted him to commit the crime, he fancied it might be got over.

The character of the judge he considered as the principal danger: he seldom summed up in favour of an acquittal.

The moment the warrener made his appearance in the felons' dock, Mat Cowls fixed his eyes upon him with a look of intense hatred. There was something at once fearful and mocking in their expression—They seemed to say : "I shall have you yet!" No sooner did the prisoner catch his snake-like glance, than the bold, confident look was exchanged for one of hopeless fear. Cold drops of perspiration started on his brow. Almost every one present noticed his agony and terror ; but none suspected the cause. His tormentor nodded and smiled, and enjoyed his confusion highly.

"Here—here!" said Sideler, beckoning his lawyer to him.

The gentleman left the table, where he was busily occupied in giving instructions to the counsel.

"What is it?" he whispered, impatiently—for he did not feel over-pleased at being brought thus publicly in such familiar contact with a person in the equivocal position of his client.

"You see that man?" said Sideler between his teeth, at the same time pointing to his quondam acquaintance.

"Yes."

"He must be removed!"

"Removed!" repeated the astonished lawyer. "Upon what pretence? Is he a witness?"

"No."

"Then, my dear sir, it will be impossible to remove him, unless, indeed, he misconducts himself—when of course it will be at the discretion of the judge or sheriff. Really this is not the time to trouble yourself or me about such fancies!"

"I tell you he must be removed!" continued the prisoner, with yet greater earnestness. "I can't be tried if he is here—I won't! The very sight of him drives me mad!"

"But why he in particular?"

"It is the hangman!"

Exhausted by the agitation the sight of that respectable functionary had caused him, the speaker covered his face with his hands.

The man of law raised his glance, and regarded Mat Cowls attentively. The little man returned his gaze with steady, imperceptible gravity : he had a great respect for members of his profession : they were the best friends he had, he used to boast.

"Hem! ah! indeed! rather singular!"

"Horrible—horrible!" murmured the murderer.

"My dear sir, I must confess that the circumstance is a little unusual," replied the lawyer ; "but do not let it affect you. In the hands of a clever council, like my learned friend Sergeant Gork, whom I have engaged to conduct the defence, it may be made available. I see—touching appeal to the jury—thrill of horror in the box—sympathy of a crowded court! Unlucky, though," he mentally added, "that the crown side have the right of a reply!"

It was unlucky, as the sequel proved.

During the trial, the warrener steadily averted his gaze from his enemy : it was only when some important point—favourable or otherwise—was elicited in evidence, that their glances occasionally met, and then only for an instant—for the countenance of the hangman wore its invariable sarcastic expression.

The indictment having been duly read, and the prisoner called upon to plead, he answered :

"Not guilty!"

"Hem—hem!"

"How will you be tried?"

Sideler replied, with the usual formula :

"By God and my country."

"God send you a good deliverance!" answered the clerk of the arraigns, in his usual matter-of-fact tone, as he handed the indictment and sundry other papers to the judge.

This time, instead of the "hem," a faint chuckle was heard in the crowded court ; none knew, save the warrener, whom it proceeded from : he *felt* that it was from his enemy, Mat Cowls.

The servants having duly deposed to the finding of the body of Sir Williau Martin, the groom, was at last called. In consideration of his age and sufferings, the judge ordered him a seat. The old man entered the court leaning on the arm of Joe Beans.

Dr. Orme, Colonel Butler, and our hero, who were seated on the bench, fancied that they detected a wandering expression in the eye of the witness, and doubted whether the crowded court and the novelty of the scene might not confuse his scarcely recovered recollection. They were mistaken : never was his intellect more clear—his memory more perfect. At his own request, Joe—previous to starting for the city—had taken Martin, at an early hour, to visit his favorite place of meditation in the stables, as the old man used to say he could reflect and think better there.

Deliberately and distinctly he gave his evidence, and clearly identified Will Sideler as the murderer of his master. The countenance of the learned Sergeant Gork looked blank as he heard him ; whilst that of the hangman, on the contrary, became hideously redolent of smiles.

The evidence being concluded, the learned sergeant commenced his cross-examination for the defence.

"How long have you known the prisoner at the bar? Look at him, sir, and recollect you are upon your oath!"

"Man and boy nearly fifty years, I should say!" replied Martin.

"You were formerly fellow-servants?"

"Yes."

"And rivals?"

"Yes."

"Rivals!" repeated the sergeant, with an air of considerable satisfaction at having elicited that important admission. "You hear, gentlemen of the jury, the witness admits that they were formerly *rivals!* I

thought I should arrive at the truth at last!"

Although there had been neither hesitation nor wish to conceal it, the man of law chose to make a point of the admission, as if it had been wrung from Martin by his tact.

"Now, sir," continued the sergeant—"and again I must remind you that you are upon your oath—and, painful as it is, I feel it to be necessary—but where the life of a fellow-creature is at stake, I shall never shrink from my duty. What was the cause of the prisoner's dismissal from the service of the late Sir William Mowbray?"

"Perhaps," said the witness, with reluctance, "you had better inquire that of the steward!"

Here Sideler whispered a few words in the ear of his lawyer, who was standing close by the dock. The worthy gentleman instantly made his way to the table, and endeavoured to attract the attention of the sergeant by pulling the sleeve of his gown. But Gork, fancying that he had obtained a point, paid little attention to the intimation. It was his forte to browbeat a witness, and he fancied that he had found an occasion to display his peculiar powers.

"I shall do no such thing, sir!" he said. "Pretty idea, indeed—that a witness is to dictate to counsel what questions they are to put, and to whom! The gentlemen of the jury," he added, turning and addressing the box in one of his most insinuating tones, "will doubtless know how to appreciate your answer! I repeat it—why was the prisoner dismissed from the service of the late Sir William Mowbray?"

"For drawing a knife upon me in a quarrel," said the witness, mildly, "and wounding me!"

The reply produced a most unfavorable impression against the prisoner throughout the court, and excited a sympathy with poor old Martin, who evidently had not wished to bring his own injuries to press upon a fallen man. A faint chuckle was once more heard. The sheriff commanded silence. Again the eyes of the hangman and Will Sideler met: the latter already felt that he was a doomed man.

"Ha! hem!" uttered the man of law. "Very generous, no doubt! We all have heard of affected generosity! Have you any witnesses of this most extraordinary fact?"

"Yes."

"Name them?"

"Mrs. Jarmy, the housekeeper at Carrow, and Nicholls, the butler," said the groom; "besides the evidence of the surgeon who dressed my wounds. I see the gentleman in court," he added. He pointed, as he spoke, to Dr. Martineau, who was seated upon the bench.

"I think, brother Gork," said the learned judge, leaning over his desk, "that it would be better for you to abandon that line of defence!"

The sergeant coloured deeply: he felt

that he had involuntarily prejudiced the case of his client.

Again there was a chuckle.

"Silence!" said the sheriff, looking angrily around.

All that ingenuity could suggest to shake the evidence of Martin, or confuse his recollection, was in vain essayed by the man of law; but the old man stood the test. Once or twice, indeed, he raised his hand to his brow, as if suffering from extreme pain, and paused before he answered; but when the answer came, it was firm and clear. Nothing could move him.

"You admit," said Gork, making a last effort, "that you have a vindictive feeling against the prisoner at the bar?"

"None!"

"Not for his having rivalled you?"

"No! The girl we both loved is dead! Her body was found in the river below Carrow Point.

"Nor for the wounds which you say be gave you?"

"Still less," replied the old man; "on my own account, I can forgive him the injuries he has done me! My lord," he added, feeling for the arm of Joe to assist him to rise, "from childhood I was the servant of the noble family of the Mowbrays. I ate their bread—I hope with a grateful heart! I was trusted, respected, and, if a poor fellow may presume to say so, almost loved by them! I would have died to prove my gratitude! It has been the will of heaven that I should live to serve them! Will your lordship permit me to ask one question?"

"Certainly!" said the judge, not a little struck by the speaker's venerable appearance and untaught eloquence.

"Has your lordship perceived, in the manner in which I have given my evidence, any desire to tamper with the truth?"

"Not in the least!"

"Go on, sir!" said the witness, addressing Gork. "I am ready—quite ready, now—to answer any question you may propose."

"Excellent!" whispered one or two of the counsellors, who highly enjoyed the discomfiture of their learned brother.

"My lord," said the sergeant, bowing respectfully towards the bench, "although the question and answer are somewhat unusual, I rejoice that this little episode has taken place, since it gives me the opportunity of setting the animus of the prosecution in its true light."

"You forget, brother, that the prosecutor in this case is the crown!" observed his lordship gravely; "which, in a case of murder, cannot be supposed to entertain any animus favourable or otherwise to the prisoner."

"You, my lord, have doubtless observed, as well as myself and every other member of the bar, that the grave proceedings of this day have been several times interrupted—grossly interrupted, I may say—by an unseemly mirth, which has doubtless surprised your lordship as it has me. But that

surprise will be changed into indignation, my lord, when I inform you that the interruption has proceeded from no less a person than the hangman, who has been brought down—purposely brought down—to confuse, terrify, and annoy my unfortunate client, whilst on a trial for his life!"

"That's a lie, my lord?" exclaimed Mat Cowls, starting from his seat. "I ain't been brought down; I came of my own accord!"

After the confusion had a little subsided, the speaker was taken into custody by one of the officers of the court.

Every glance was directed towards him—but he bore it unshrinkingly.

"What is the meaning of this indecent interruption?" demanded his lordship.

"I ain't made no indecent interruption?" replied Mat; "none whatsoever! I knows better, my lord!"

"What brought you here?"

"Friendship, my lord!" said the hangman; "prisoner and I were very intimate in Newgate—weren't we, Will?"

The prisoner shuddered.

"I think, my lord," observed the counsel for the crown, "that I can throw some light upon the subject. The unfortunate man at the bar lately escaped from Newgate, where he was confined upon a charge of attempting to commit a murder upon the person of a respectable gentleman, the lawyer of the late Sir William Mowbray."

"Another murder?"

"Yes, my lord," continued the learned barrister; "in the event of an acquittal upon the present charge, an officer is in waiting to take him into custody upon the previous one."

Mat Cowls smiled and chuckled.

"Sit down, sir!" said the judge, with a half-amused, half-angry air; "and no more interruption!"

"Certainly, my lord!" said Mat; "we know how to behave on these occasions!"

Lord Shark looked for an instant intently at the speaker, as if to discover whether the *we*, which caused a titter amongst the members of the bar, had been intended as a piece of peculiar impertinence or not; but Mat's countenance remained unmoved.

The trial was continued.

Despite the very eloquent pleading of Sergeant Gork, the evidence was too strong; the jury, after a brief hesitation, brought in a verdict of "Guilty."

Once more, and for the last time, the chuckle of the hangman was heard; but before the order which the sheriff gave to take him into custody could be acted on, Mat Cowls had left the court.

In passing sentence, the judge held out no hope of mercy. The prisoner, stupefied and overwhelmed with terror, was led from the dock by the goalers.

That same evening our hero, Dr. Orme, and Lawyer Elworthy returned to London.

The news of the warrener's condemnation was speedily known at Carrow. Many rejoiced—none pitied him. When Red Ralph heard the news, he danced and

grinned for joy: he had long promised himself the pleasure of seeing the execution of his enemy.

Joe Beans, who witnessed his unseemly mirth, shuddered and reproved him; his nature was too manly to rejoice at the sufferings even of a wretch like Will Sideler.

In the good old hanging days of George III., but four-and-twenty hours were by law allowed between the sentence and the execution of a murderer; although the humanity of the judge, or the contrivance of the sheriff, by arranging that the trial should take place upon a Friday—as in the present instance—gave the condemned wretch the respite of one day—Sunday, To the warrener the boon was an additional torture—not an act of mercy: he had so many hours longer to endure the load of life.

On his return to his cells, he stormed and cursed; his despair and execrations were fearful; even the turnkeys who watched him, accustomed as they were to scenes of misery and despair, were unnerved by his fearful blasphemies, which drove the respectable chaplain, who visited him soon after his condemnation, from the cell, in terror and disgust.

"Such a case, I fear, is hopeless!" said the venerable man, to Mr. Johnson, the governor, who had accompanied him.

"Not so," replied the experienced official; "return to-morrow, reverend sir: such passions generally exhaust themselves. To-morrow you will find him as eager to receive your consolations as to-day he is reckless and insolent. It is your cold and sullen criminals that die the hardest!"

The event proved that the speaker was right.

CHAPTER L.

Shun'd as men shun the loathsome thing,
Repugnant to their natures—or as he
Upon whose brow the avenging angel set
The brand which marked the first-born murderer's
doom.

THE HEADSMAN.

The City of Norwich—the ancient capital of the East Angles—has frequently and not inappropriately been designated the City of Gardens: its narrow, quaint, irregular streets being interspersed with pleasant, verdant patches and meadows, which add a beauty to their picturesque appearance.

Besides the castle—a fine old Saxon keep, which the modern Solons of the country have lately beautified, and which rises proudly from an elevated mound in the centre of a plain situated in the very heart of the city—Norwich possesses much to interest the antiquary and the artist—namely, a magnificent cathedral, two fine old halls, and six-and-thirty churches, to say nothing of several modern monstrosities which have lately been erected in the suburbs.

Remains of the city wall and towers, built chiefly of flint and stone, are still standing; but the embattled gates, interesting specimens of the architecture of the

middle ages, have disappeared—destroyed by the incursion of Vandals who, under the name of mayors and aldermen, so long governed, or rather misgoverned, the place, for the sake of what they termed improvements.

The same men would have sold their forefathers' gravestones, provided they could have turned an honest penny by them.

Where the last vestige of the fosse, or moat, which formerly surrounded the castle—now used as the county prison—disappears, runs a long, irregular lane, known by the name of Rose Lane ; it was skirted on either side by old brick walls, broken here and there to admit of the erection of cottages, which were inhabited chiefly by poor weavers, or the workmen employed at the foundries—Watson's and Ker's.

At the period of our tale, the inhabitants of Rose Lane formed a community apart from the rest of the city. The rent of cottages and garden land being exceedingly cheap, decent poverty had found a refuge there ; if abundance was unknown, positive destitution was equally a stranger to them. They were a simple, hard-working, contented race, retaining most of the superstitions and prejudices, as well as the better qualities of the English peasant and artisan.

In the wall which ran on the right side of the lane was a small door, the only means of access to a nest of cottages, dotted here and there, each in its separate patch of garden, well planted with vegetables and fruit-trees. One of these cottages was inhabited by a tall, thin, venerable-looking man, who was generally regarded with terror and dislike by his neighbors.

It was Sam Lane, the city hangman.

The only inmate of the house besides the executioner, was a pale, sickly boy, about thirteen—his grandson. Unlike other children of his age, he had neither play-fellows nor companions—all shunned him. The prejudice which for years had made the old man a solitary being upon the face of the earth, attached itself to his descendant. If he ventured to quit the limits of the little garden, which, being at the back of the cottage, fortunately could not be overlooked, the boys scoffed at or pelted him. Although he seldom complained, the little fellow felt his state of isolation keenly ; it gradually chilled his heart and with it the springs of health and life.

Solitude made him prematurely thoughtful. He was one of those unhappy beings condemned never to know the joys of childhood.

Although Sam Lane was far from being an uneducated man, he took not the least pains to instruct his grandson : perhaps he thought it better that the boy should be reared in ignorance. Knowledge develops the heart—his philosophy was to crush : he permitted, therefore, rather than encouraged, a kind old man named Blackmore, for many years a teacher in the charity school at the end of the lane, to drop in occasionally of an evening, and teach the boy his letters.

Had he foreseen the result, in all probability he would have forbidden him—forbidden him for the very love he bore his scholar—whose energies having once found a channel for exertion, were no longer to be repressed. He devoured rather than acquired the lessons which his teacher set before him, till his kind instructor had nothing more to teach him.

Master Blackmore—as the teacher of the charity school was generally called in the neighborhood—gradually felt interested in the uncommon zeal and intelligence of his pupil, whom he determined, if possible, to save from the state of isolation engendering those morbid feelings which were gradually destroying him. Full of this benevolent purpose, he had written to one of the trustees of the school, a large shipowner in London, who, on his recommendation, offered to take Reuben—the name of the boy—as an apprentice on board one of his ships, bound for the East Indies, provided his friends would provide him with an outfit, the cost of which was about twenty pounds—a sum far beyond his own means or that of the grandfather to raise.

Reuben had been sent to play in the garden whilst the old men talked over the affair in the cottage.

"It's a pity such an opportunity should be lost for serving the poor boy, ain't it, Mr. Blackmore?" said the hangman, thoughtfully ; "but what can I do? Were I to sell all that I am worth, it would not fetch more than half the sum."

"I hoped that you had saved——"

"Saved!" interrupted Lane ; "what should I save? They charge me the highest price for everything I buy, and then scarcely care to serve me. Were I to die to-morrow, they would have to sell the bed and chairs to bury me, or call upon the parish to do it."

"Have you no friends?"

"Friends!" repeated the hangman, bitterly ; "I am astonished, Mr. Blackmore, that a man of your sense should ask such a question as that!"

The teacher reflected for several minutes. His own stipend was but thirty pounds a year, out of which he had to support an aged sister, who kept house for him. Still he thought that, with a little pinching, he might contrive to spare five pounds towards the outfit of his pupil. He had just concluded in his own mind to make the offer, when a rap was heard at the door of the cottage.

"Come in!" said its owner.

A disagreeable, withered-looking little man, dressed in a shabby suit of black, not one article of which, apparently, had been made for him, entered the kitchen :

"Is your name," he said, addressing the executioner, "Sam Lane?"

"It is."

"Hangman to the city and county?"

"Even so," answered the old man, with a sigh.

"I wish to speak with you," said his visitor.

"Upon business, sir?"

"On business!—of course on business!" replied the stranger, with a chuckle which rendered his countenance only the more hideous; "few come here upon pleasure, I should suppose! My name is Mat Cowls."

At the name of so distinguished a *confrère*, Lane started from his seat by the window, and begged him to take a chair.

"I have heard what you have been talking about," continued his visitor, as he seated himself next to the teacher of the charity school, who involuntarily shuddered at the proximity, "and want to talk to you about it—*alone*."

At the word "*alone*," Blackmore rose, and said that he would join Reuben in the garden.

"And so," continued Mat, as soon as he disappeared, "you want to get rid of that youngster of yours. Doesn't like his grandfather's business? All prejudice—ignorant prejudice—but what can people expect who live in the country?"

"The poor boy," said the old man, "deserves a better fate than to pine and mope in this dull place, or be made a scoff of and be pealed by those of his own age, if he ventures beyond the garden gate—and all because his grandfather is the hangman!"

"And so he does!" growled Mat, who very naturally shared in the indignation of his colleague.

"An opportunity has offered of sending him to sea."

His visitor nodded.

"The only difficulty is to find——"

"Twenty pounds for his outfit," interrupted Mat. "I know—I overheard all you and the other old fellow were saying. Twenty pounds is a large sum," he added, musingly; "but don't let that distress you. I'll provide it for you."

"You?"

"L"

"You give twenty pounds for the outfit of my grandson!" exclaimed Sam Lane; "surely you are jesting!"

"Who talked about *giving*?" answered the hangman, with a knowing wink. "I don't think I look so green as that! I said I would provide the money."

"And is not that the same thing?" demanded Lane.

"Not quite! I don't mind helping a friend, provided I put something in my own pocket at the same time: benevolence is all very well, only it doesn't pay. You understand!"

The grandfather of poor Reuben regarded his visitor with a look which indicated that he was very far from understanding him, and wished him to explain.

"You've heard, I suppose," continued Mat, "that a prisoner is left for execution, for the murder of Sir William Mowbray?"

Lane answered, with a sigh, that he had heard it. Necessity, not taste, had induced him to accept his disgusting office, and time had failed to reconcile him to the exercise of it.

"He must be hung on Monday morning?"

"Alas! yes!"

"Now, suppose," continued his visitor—"mind I only say suppose—that you were to be taken ill on Sunday night: what a pretty fix the sheriff would be in!"

"Dreadful!"

"He must hang the fellow, in that case, himself or find a substitute."

"I have heard so."

"No doubt he would pay handsomely—I should say very handsomely"—observed Mat, with a knowing wink, "any one to take the job off his hands—fifty pounds at least; and you and I could share the money. Now do you understand?"

At last Sam Lane did understand him. It was certainly a novel expedient of his *confrère* to gratify his personal revenge against the warrener, and put five-and-twenty pounds into his pocket; but Cowls was a prudent man, and too quick-witted to lose an opportunity of turning even his pleasures to a profitable account. His first intention had been to ask the old man to permit him to officiate for him as a favor—nay, even to go as far as offering him a bribe for the permission—but the conversation which he had overheard at the door of the cottage induced him to change it. He saw the occasion, and, like a hardy speculator, seized it. Mat Cowls would have doubtless been a great man, had fate made him a stockbroker instead of a hangman; but genius is often lost for want of an opportunity.

"The sheriff is a close-fisted man," observed Lane, doubtfully; "and will hardly pay so large a sum as fifty pounds. He would sooner hang the prisoner himself."

"Pooh—pooh! Is he married?"

"Yes?"

"And got a family?"

"Both sons and daughters," was the reply. "Then he will be sure to pay!" replied Mat, with an air of deep conviction; "no doubt, too, he is rich?"

"Very rich!" said his brother hangman; who began to consider the transaction in a more favorable light. "From boyhood he was always a mean, scraping fellow. I've heard that when his father died, although the old man left him a mint of money, he shaved the corpse himself, rather than pay half-a-crown to Kelf, the barbér. Since then he has gone on making and making money like dirt—has got his fingers into most of the charities: and it's an old saying in Norwich," he added, "that whoever gets a handling of them is sure to grow rich."

"Fifty pounds!" exclaimed his hearer, in a tone of contempt. "I am too moderate; I ought to ask a hundred!"

"We, you mean?" observed Lane, suspiciously.

"Of course I mean we!" said Mat, with an appearance of sincerity, which was very far from inspiring his colleague with the confidence he intended.

It was finally arranged between the two worthies that the scheme should be tried, and Mat Cowls took his leave, promising to return the following day.

"Perhaps," he said, as he shook hands with Lane, at the door of his cottage ; "you had better begin by a little indisposition this evening. You can get worse in the morning, and be very bad towards night."

The old man replied by a nod of intelligence, as much as to say that he understood him.

When Reuben and his tutor entered the house, he found his grandfather standing in the centre of the sanded floor, lost in profound reflection.

"Is he gone?" inquired the boy.

"Gone! Who?"

"That evil-looking man."

"Do not condemn him," answered the hangman ; "since it is to him that you will owe the means of escaping a destiny as lonely and wretched as your grandfather's! Go to bed, Reuben," he added, kindly, at the same time passing his hand over the curly head of the lad. "I want to have some conversation with Mr. Blackmore."

"Did I understand you rightly," said the warm-hearted teacher, as soon as they were alone, "that means would be found for the outfit of the poor boy?"

"You did!"

"And by the singular-looking person who has just left?"

"Through him!"

"I should rejoice at this," observed his benevolent visitor—"heartily rejoice at it, were I assured that the money is not the price of some act which justice or religion would condemn!"

The old man assured him, in a yet sadder tone, that neither justice nor religion were opposed to the means by which the welfare of his pupil was to be promoted.

"What makes you so dull, then?" inquired Mr. Blackmore, more and more struck by his peculiar tone and manner.

"The necessity of parting with him!" exclaimed Sam Lane, bitterly. "You forgot how lonely my existence will be without him. Outcast from the world—hangman as I am—with Reuben near me, I feel that my heart is still human!"

That night, it was several hours after taking possession of his humble bed, before the old teacher could compose himself to sleep. His brain was busy with new and abstruse speculations. He had seen humanity in a new phase, and was puzzled to reconcile its contrasts.

CHAPTER LI.

Avenging furies haunt the murderer's dreams,
With hissing snakes, plucked from their hideous
crests,
Lashing his soul to madness.

ORESTES IN ARGOS.

AFTER the departure of the chaplain from his cell, the impotent fury of the warrener gradually subsided into sullen, mute despair. His first idea had been to imitate the being who had tempted him, and seek refuge from the horrors of the scaffold, the yelling crowd, and the gripe of the hang-

man, in suicide. But a slight reflection convinced him this would be impossible. Both the governor of the castle and the sheriff had given strict orders that he should be watched day and night—never to be left for an instant; and those to whom the task was confided were too well accustomed to the melancholy duty to perform it carelessly. They spoke to the wretched man with kindness, but firmness; listened to his passionate protestations of innocence with that calm silence which expresses incredulity more powerfully even than words.

Worn out at last by the violence of his emotions, the wretched man threw himself upon his pallet, and soon was buried in a profound, but not a peaceful slumber. It was broken by dreams more dreadful than the waking reality of the doom suspended over him.

In those few hours' sleep, the events of his evil life passed in review before him. His passionate, unruly boyhood, and the petty crimes which led him, step by step, towards the abyss of guilt; next, the image of a fair girl, whom he had loved with all the savage energy of his nature, rose like an accusing spirit before him. Her blue-eyes, eloquent in their thoughtful expression, were fixed on his, as if they would read the very workings of his soul! Gradually the phantom became indistinct; but as it faded from his gaze, it seemed to point to a dark, misty shadow hovering in the distance. Cold drops of perspiration broke on his wrinkled brow, and he groaned and writhed with terror.

The turnkeys, who had seated themselves close to the bed, noticed the agitation of their charge.

"He is dreaming?" whispered the elder, whom experience had long rendered familiar with such scenes. "I knew his courage would not last! He will be humbled and subdued enough by morning. The chaplain will have easy work with him!"

His companion nodded, to intimate that he was of the same opinion. Will Sideier gave a deep groan, and murmured a few indistinct words.

"Hush!" said the first speaker. "We shall hear something!"

The dream of the murderer had changed. The stately form of Sir William Mowbray, as he had seen him in life, stood glaring on him, and pointing to the still distant phantom, whose hideous outline was gradually growing terribly distinct. At last it assumed the wiry proportions and mocking features of Mat Cowl, the hangman. No sooner did the sleeper recognize him in his dream, than he groaned and shuddered. His entire frame became convulsed, as with the death-spasm; and he writhed and turned upon his pallet like a crushed snake upon a bed of fire.

"This is horrible!" exclaimed the younger of the two turnkeys; "for heaven's sake wake him! I can't bear to look upon him! See," he added, "how his hair bristles, and his brows work! Wake him—wake him!"

"Not yet!" replied his more philosophic comrade; "for my part, I don't dislike to see him. Such dreams will do more to soften his hardened spirit than all the chaplain's preaching."

At this moment, the warrener uttered a yell of such intense agony, that it startled both the watchers.

"He fancies that he is struggling with the hangman!" whispered one; "see how the veins and muscles of his throat swell! now he raises his hands to it!"

"No—no—God! Mercy—mercy!" shrieked the conscience-stricken wretch, half starting from the bed, and looking wildly round him. "Where am I?" he demanded, after a moment's pause, during which he was evidently trying to recollect himself. "I see—I know—the condemned cell!"

He buried his convulsed features in the rough coverlid of his bed, and wept. The strong man wept bitterly.

The situation might have appalled a stouter heart than his. The gloomy cell of unhewn granite, lit only by the light of a single lamp, rendering its darkness visible; the pale countenances and fixed eyes of the two turnkeys glaring upon him with strange interest and horror; the silence of the night broken only by deep sobs and groans, which broke from his rugged heart.

The younger of the gaolers filled a small tin cup from a pitcher of water which stood upon the table, and held it to the parched lips of the prisoner.

"Drink!" he said; "it will revive you."

"No water!" exclaimed Will Sideler, dashing it aside; "I loathe the sight of water! Give me brandy—I can pay for it," he added, "handsomely! For God's sake, let me have brandy!"

The man silently picked up the cup, which had rolled upon the floor, and replaced it on the table.

"Brandy!" continued the prisoner, with an imploring look—"brandy!"

"It is against the rules!" observed the elder turnkey. "Besides, we have no means of procuring it, even if we had the inclination. You had better try to sleep again."

"To sleep!" repeated the warrener, with a hideous laugh; "I won't sleep—I dare not sleep again! How pale you look, and how you both stare at me!" he added, "did I say anything in my dream?"

Neither of the turnkeys answered him.

"Why don't you speak?" exclaimed the Russian, furiously.

"You had better pray!" observed the elder of the men! "It will calm you.—The chaplain will be here early in the morning."

"I don't want to see him—he can do me no good! It's hard—very hard—to be hanged like a dog, innocently, isn't it?"

"To be hanged innocently is very hard, certainly!"

"But they won't do it!" continued the prisoner; "they dare not—there will be a reprieve! The judge cannot believe that

I am guilty! The jury were perjured—the witnesses perjured, too! I have known a reprieve arrive at the last hour—have not you?"

"The judge has left the town!" replied the young man.

"But there will be a post on Monday morning!"

He looked eagerly into the faces of both the men, as if to read in their eyes the confirmation of the hope—which, faint as it was, most criminals retain to the last hour. But when he saw their incredulity, he turned once more upon his side, and wept bitterly.

"Pray!" repeated the one who had previously given the same advice; "it will do you more good than either brandy or false hopes! Ask mercy of God—perhaps he will hear you."

During the rest of the night, Will Sideler maintained a sullen silence. Once or twice, when he felthimself inclined to sleep, he started from his pallet, and paced the cell with irregular strides. Terrible as were his waking reflections, it was evident they were less horrible than the dreams which haunted his slumbers.

As the old turnkey foretold, when the chaplain arrived the following morning, he found the criminal far more inclined to listen to his exhortations.

Anthony Skinner, who at that period filled the important office of sheriff, was known—as Lane, the hangman, had expressed it—to be a hard, close-fisted man; but he possessed one qualification which, in the eyes of the citizens, superseded the necessity of every other: he was rich—very rich. His claims to intellect, character, feeling, were all united in that one word—money; and, to judge from the tenacity with which he clung to it, no man felt the value of wealth more than himself. It was his idol—his god—from boyhood he had known no other. His hard, stern features were an index of his mind. If by any accident poverty addressed to him its prayer, no sooner did the suppliant catch the expression of his cold gray eye, than he turned hopelessly away, the words frozen upon his lips: and yet this man—this thing of stone, not flesh—was one of the trustees of the many charities of the city! Having described him, it were needless to add how the widow and the orphan fared, whose rights were vested in such guardianship.

The civic dignitary was seated at supper, with his wife and family—consisting of a son, whom he was educating for the law, and two daughters, as vain and coarse-featured as himself—when the servant announced that the governor of the gaol wished to see him.

"Clear the table!" said his master, with prudent foresight; "put the great Bible upon the table, and then admit him."

Despite the dissatisfied looks of his family, his orders were obeyed. The sacred volume, whose every precept teaches justice to the poor, and mercy, was opened before the wealthy hypocrite. It was one

of those pious mockeries at which angels weep, and Satan rejoices.

"Well, Johnson!" he said, as the respectable governor of the prison entered the dining-room, "has anything particular occurred? eh?"

"Most embarrassing, sir!" replied the visitor; "Lane, the hangman, has been taken suddenly ill!"

"Ah, indeed!"

Evidently Mr. Anthony Skinner did not comprehend the importance of the communication, or the unpleasant consequences which might possibly result from it.

"What is the matter with the fellow?" added the speaker.

"An intermittent fever, I believe, which renders him incapable of performing his office to-morrow."

A very disagreeable light began to break in upon the obtuse intellect of the dignitary.

"Who the devil—ahem! The *Lord* forgive me!" he exclaimed—"is to hang the prisoner, then?"

Mr. Johnson informed him that was exactly the point on which he had felt it necessary to consult him; adding, by way of consolation, that in the absence of the executioner, it was the duty of the sheriff to carry the sentence into execution.

"What! hang the man! Hang him myself!"

"Even so, sir!" said his visitor, bowing to conceal an involuntary smile.

The countenances of the whole family of the Skinners began to look awfully blank.

"Pooh! ridiculous!" muttered the very respectable Mr. Anthony, after a pause; "send down to the workhouse—tell the master to pick out a strong, able-bodied pauper, and I'll—I'll give him a guinea."

The reluctance with which the *municipal* offer was made, showed the severe struggle which had taken place in the breast of the speaker, before he had brought himself to consent to such a sacrifice.

"I fear it will be useless, sir!" replied the governor; "I question if, for ten times such a sum, you would find a man, even amongst the inmates of the workhouse, to perform the disgusting office."

"Ignorant wretches!" exclaimed the sheriff, who both looked and felt surprised at the idea of any poor man being found to reject the opportunity of earning a guinea.

"Well, then!" he said, "one of the city officers must do it."

Mr. Johnson shook his head.

"Or a turnkey!"

"If you were to offer them a hundred times the sum, you would not find one of them to undertake it."

"Then I'll discharge—dismiss them all!" exclaimed the miser, furiously; "pretty squeamish fellows—to leave me in such an embarrassing position! What am I to do?"

Mr. Johnson felt very much inclined to reply, "Hang him yourself!" but prudence as well as courtesy kept him silent.

"Lor, papa!" said the eldest Miss Skinner, whose gentility had taken the alarm;

"surely they will never expect you to—to do such a thing!"

The young lady did not choose to make use of the word "hang"—it did not sound pretty.

"Fortunately," observed their visitor, "the sheriff will be spared so unpleasant an alternative. Mat Cowls, the London executioner, happens to be in the city, on a visit to Lane, I presume. I have spoken with the fellow, and he has consented to officiate for his colleague."

"Handsome—very handsome of the fellow!" interrupted Anthony Skinner, his countenance radiant with smiles.

"On one condition!"

At the word "condition," it once more became clouded. Instinctively the man of money felt that it implied an attack upon his purse.

"Condition?" he repeated.

"That he is paid fifty guineas!"

"Fifty devils!" roared the sheriff—"Who ever heard of such a sum just for putting a rope round a man's neck, tying a knot, and drawing a bolt? why, I'd do it myself for half—"

Shame prevented his finishing the declaration.

"I am afraid, sir," replied Mr. Johnson, seriously, "that you will find the man obstinate! He is perfectly aware of the position in which you are placed, and that the execution must be performed to-morrow! I do not think he will take a single guinea less!"

"Then I will do it myself!" exclaimed the old man, with an air of dogged resolution.

The governor looked disgusted.

"You papa!" cried the Misses Skinner.

"Anthony—Anthony!" remonstrated his wife; "what will the world say?"

"Hang the world!" roared her husband. "If I must do it, the law is to blame—not me! Didn't Julius Caesar, or Macbeth, I forget which, put his own child to death, and wasn't he applauded for it?"

"Brutus, papa, you mean!" whispered his better informed son.

"Brutus, Macbeth, or Julius Caesar," answered the old man, testily; "it's all the same; didn't I pay a guinea for a box?" he added, with a wince at the recollection of such extravagance, "to see it at the theatre, the night that fool Grub, the mayor, gave his 'bespeak,' I think they called it!"

The family of the miser did *not* think it all the same: his wife and daughters felt that after such an exhibition they could never again show their faces in society. Even his hopeful son—who was as fully possessed of the value of fifty pounds as his respectable progenitor—began to remonstrate; and after great entreaty, their united efforts prevailed on the miser to commission Mr. Johnson to offer Mat Cowls the extravagant sum of five pounds, to act as substitute for the city hangman in the morning.

"I will do so," said the governor, as he

took his leave : "but I feel quite certain that it will be useless!"

The Skinners passed a sleepless night: from the oldest to the youngest, all dreaded the events of the coming morning.

CHAPTER LII.

They are well-matched, oil and vinegar,
They will do very well together.—SHERIDAN.

At an early hour on the following morning, the resolution of the sheriff to perform the office of hangman himself, rather than submit to the extortionate demands of Mat Cowls, was pretty generally whispered in the city. The poorer inhabitants believed it—they knew, by bitter experience, the griping, avaricious nature of the man. The higher classes were both astonished and indignant at the thought of such a scandal; and several of his political friends, feeling that their own respectability would be compromised by such an act, resolved at any sacrifice to prevent it. They accordingly waylaid him, as at an early hour he left his house, to seek the residence of Sam Lane. He had a note in his hand, which had just arrived from Johnson, informing him that he had seen Mat Cowles, as he desired, and found him inflexible. It concluded by respectfully advising him to comply with his terms.

"There goes the hangman!" shouted a group of boys, as he crossed the market-place. Anthony Skinner turned pale, but doggedly pursued his way.

"Five pounds!" he muttered—"not a shilling more! My mind is made up, come what may!"

As he reached the entrance to Davy Place—then scarcely finished—he encountered several of his party. He would willingly have avoided them, but they were not to be shaken off. Their own respectability they considered to be at stake. An animated discussion, in which remonstrance and ridicule were alternately employed, took place, as they pursued their way to the cottage of the hangman.

According to the instructions of his colleague, Sam Lane was still in bed. His grandson, as usual on such occasions, at a very early hour had been sent to pass the day from home with an aged widow, to whom he was distantly related, in the pleasant village of Thorp. The poor lad felt too keenly his social degradation, to be left alone in the house on hanging mornings.

"I don't think he will send again!" said the old man, with a sigh, alluding to the city functionary. "If Colonel Harvey, or even Bignold, had been sheriff, it would have been settled by this time!"

This was addressed to Mat Cowls, who was seated by the side of his bed, quietly smoking his pipe.

"He will come," replied the wretch, in a confident tone, "or send!"

Sam Lane shook his head, doubtfully.

"I tell you that he will!" continued the speaker, at the same time deliberately puff-

ing the smoke through his teeth. "He'll never have the nerve to do it himself."

"You don't know him?" was the reply.

"I know human *natur'*!" answered Mat; "and that is enough for me! It's all very well for him to bluster, and hold out; but only wait till he hears the bell, and sees the prisoner with his pale face, chattering teeth, and despairing look—as you and I have seen 'em! Why, when I first took to the trade," he added, "it unnerved even me! I would have given fifty pounds myself, if I had had such a sum, to have turned the job over to another!"

His brother hangman shuddered. He remembered how often he had experienced the same sickening feeling himself.

"Hush!" whispered Mat, laying down his pipe, and listening. "There is some one in the garden! Brush your hair back from your face, and look as like a croaker you can!"

There was little need of the caution: for what between hope and fear, joined to the terror which he felt at the idea of being called upon to perform his painful office, Sam Lane appeared more dead than alive already. The door of the cottage opened, and Anthony Skinner, accompanied by two of the gentlemen who had lately joined him, marched into the room.

"So," he said, walking straight to the foot of the bed, "a pretty time to be ill, indeed! Who do you imagine is to perform your office for you?"

"I don't know, answered the old man, meekly. "It's not my fault, gentlemen; I can't help sickness!"

"He leaves it in the hands of the sheriff!" chimed in Mat, with a sinister leer.

Although the city dignitary knew instinctively who the speaker was, he felt too indignant to answer him.

"You don't appear so very bad!" continued the rich man, willing to try the effect of a little coaxing. "Try what a little brandy will do! You shall ride to the gaol! If you don't perform it quite so well," he added, in a considerate tone, "we will look over it!"

"How very kind!" observed Cowls.

"And the five guineas which I would have given this fellow," added the miser, after a mental struggle, "shall be yours!"

Here Lane, with a deep groan, fell back upon his pillow, pretending to be overcome with exhaustion. So well was it acted, that even the lynx-eyed sheriff was deceived.

"Curse the rascal!" he exclaimed. "I believe that he is dying!"

"And enough to make him die!" retorted Mat; "to be asked to do such a thing at such a time! But it's like you rich men—no pity for the poor!"

"Why do not you officiate for him?" observed one of the gentlemen, for the first time breaking silence.

"I have offered to do so already."

"Yes, for fifty pounds!"

"And very little, too!" replied the hangman. "It's bad enough to have to do

it in the regular way of business in London, where nobody knows it; but here, on a party of pleasure, to run the risk of being called after in the streets, 'There goes Jack Ketch! ain't nowise pleasant! So, if the gentleman likes the job,' he added, glancing towards the sheriff, 'he is perfectly welcome to it!'

'I shall do it!' said Anthony Skinner, resolutely.

'As you please, sir. To show you that I have no malice, I'll just show you how to tie the knot. You'll soon learn—it ain't every one that has a taste for such things.'

So saying he pulled a small coil of strong rope, which had been well greased and stretched, from his pocket, and, with considerable dexterity, began to twist it into a formidable noose. For the first time the determination of the miser began to give way. He felt sick at the forcing-pump, which out of courtesy we suppose we must call his heart. The gentlemen who accompanied him, too, looked remarkably bilious.

'Come, old fellow!' whispered one in the ear of the sheriff; 'it is time to end this nonsense—pay the money!'

'Never!'

'Consider the dignity of your office—your family! Your party will see that you are no loser!'

This last consideration prevailed. No sooner was he assured that the fifty pounds were not to come out of his own pocket, than the miserly wretch felt as anxious to be relieved from the dreadful responsibility as he had before been resolute to go through with it. After sundry more whisperings and consultations, it was finally settled that the demands of Mat Cowls should be complied with.

'In that case,' said the fellow, with a feeling of intense satisfaction—for even his confidence began to be shaken—"I may as well put the rope in my pocket again."

'You may,' replied the sheriff, angrily. 'Come to me as soon as the execution is over, and I'll settle with you.'

'Never give credit in my line!' cried the ruffian, with a chuckle; 'it ain't the custom of the craft!'

'Do you doubt me, fellow?'

'Yes!' replied the hangman, bluntly; 'very much I doubt you! chaffering and bargaining with a poor devil like myself for a few paltry guineas! Suppose you were to refuse to pay me after it is done—a fine chance I should have of going to law with a long purse like yours! I ain't got no charities to fall back upon!'

'For heaven's sake, pay him!' exclaimed one of the gentlemen; 'and let us leave this place!'

One by one, as though they were so many drops from his very heart, did Sheriff Skinner count down the glittering coin. When they were all placed upon the table before him, Mat Cowls began as slowly to pick them up. The ruffian enjoyed the torment which he knew he was inflicting.

"You will not fail!" observed one of the visitors.

"Business, gentlemen!" said Mat, with a grin; "always punctual in matters of business!"

The sheriff, despite his promise, informed him, angrily, that he should leave two of his officers who were waiting outside in the garden, with strict orders not to lose sight of him till he had performed the office for which he had been so extravagantly paid.

So saying, the party left the cottage.

"Have you got them?" demanded Sam Lane, as soon as he heard the door close behind them.

"All—fifty bright, shining yellow guineas—as good as ever came from his majesty's mint!" replied his confederate. "I knew that I should get them!" he added: "the sight of the rope did it? The old bunks could not stand that! Good bye!" he said, hastily; at the same time buttoning up the pocket which contained the fifty pounds. "I must be off: when it is all over I shall return and settle."

"We must settle *now*, Mat!" said the old man, leaping nimbly from the bed; "as you observed just now, we never give credit in our line of business! It isn't the custom of the craft!"

"Do you doubt me?"

"Yes!" answered Lane, repeating his own words: "I very much doubt you! Suppose you were to refuse to pay me after it is done: a fine chance I should have of going to law with a long purse like yours! So pay it down," he added, "or I shall find myself sufficiently recovered to hang the man myself!"

Mat Cowls looked first at the speaker and then at the window, through which he saw the two officers waiting. The struggle which he endured at parting with the half of his ill-gotten gains, was scarcely less than the sheriff's. Prudence, and the burning desire he felt of avenging himself upon Will Sideler, at last prevailed. With a bitter curse, he threw down the money, and left the cottage. His colleague, after barring the door carefully, gathered it up and once more retired to his bed. He had obtained the means of preserving his grandson from a life of misery and shame; and even in his solitude the hangman felt content.

CHAPTER LIII.

Death is indeed most terrible, e'en when it comes
Unto the sinless couch, and weeping friends
Whisper religion's last consoling prayer;
But on the scaffold, 'mid the rabble's curse,
When conscience echoes back the accusing cry,
It falls with tenfold horror. ODEON.

From the first dawn of morning, the crowd had gradually been collecting before the scaffold erected during the night in front of the prison. They came not only from the city and its suburbs, but the adjacent villages. So universal was the horror and detestation of the deed for which the warrener was about to suffer, that not a single voice amid the countless multitude was

heard to pity him—yet there were many from Carrow who had known him from their childhood; but they had also known his victim—the good and benevolent Sir William Mowbray.

Foremost in the ranks was the imp-like person of Red Ralph: the uncouth urchin had never witnessed an execution, and he felt as impatient for the horrid spectacle as a boy at his first play.

Many in the crowd who had known Sideler for years, speculated on the probability of his making a confession, or dying game, as they termed it; others, acquainted with his resolute character, predicted that he would remain obstinately sullen to the last.

The dilemma of the sheriff, from the sudden indisposition of the hangman, was a general theme of mirth—mirth on such an occasion! When will the mob respect themselves sufficiently to justify the friends of humanity in calling them the people?

As usual, there was a considerable number of females present: scenes of horror seem to possess a peculiar species of fascination for the gentler sex.

"*Fession!*" repeated Red Ralph, who had caught the word from those who were discussing the approaching tragedy near him; "he won't make no *fession*—it ain't likely!"

"Why not, my little man?" demanded one of the crowd.

"Cos it's *summut* good, I s'pose," replied the boy, "and bean't in the natur' of un; t'old un be naturally wicked; besides, it isn't the fust murder he has committed! He would have done for I, if I had been fool enough to let un *catch* me!"

"For you?"

"Ees."

The urchin suddenly found himself an important personage in the eyes of those who were nearest to him; and, nothing loth, began to relate his adventures with the warrener in the old house at Mortlake. Whilst he is thus gratifying their curiosity and his own vanity—for, like older and wiser personages, Ralph loved to be the hero of a tale—we will request our readers to accompany us to the interior of the gaol, where preparations were going on for the completion of the last awful act of unrelenting justice.

As the hour of death approached, the reckless bearing of Will Sideler gradually gave way to a more subdued tone and manner. It was evident to all that the bully was cowed, and the natural quality of the cur—cowardice—prevailed. He listened to the exhortations of the chaplain, not with the fervor of a true repentance, but with a feverish hope, which had not yet abandoned him, that something would turn up to save him. Bitterly did he lament his rashness in having denounced his accomplice, Meeran Hafaz. Had the young Indian lived, he felt assured that his influence, wealth, and daring spirit would have found the means to avert his impending doom.

Little did the murderer—even at that

awful moment—seem to understand how strong a grasp the iron hand of justice at last had laid hold upon him.

The criminal and the clergyman were alone together in the little chapel of the prison. Vainly had the worthy man endeavored, by prayer and exhortation, to draw from him a confession. To all his entreaties, the warrener opposed positive negation or sullen silence; he experienced a dogged kind of satisfaction in refusing to gratify what he considered the curiosity of his enemies: they might hang him, he thought, but should never make him speak.

From time to time he cast restless glances towards the door, through which the hum of voices, the fearful whisperings of the officials in the passage, who were waiting the first stroke of noon to conduct him to the scaffold, at times were distinctly heard.

It is astonishing how keen the perceptions become, when terror sharpens them.

The features of the warrener assumed a yet more deadly hue, when the governor of the gaol, dressed in black, entered the chapel: he exchanged looks with the chaplain.

"It is not twelve yet!" gasped the prisoner, pale with terror; "it can't be twelve!"

Mr. Johnson was spared the pain of replying, by a loud knock at the door of the chapel.

"Who is there?" he demanded, in the usual form.

The reply was made in the harsh voice of Anthony Skinner, demanding, in the king's name, that the body of William Sideler, convicted of murder, should be given up to the sheriff for execution, pursuant to sentence.

The doors were thrown open, and the functionary, attended by his officers and half a dozen turnkeys, made his appearance.

A few hastily-muttered words, and a receipt for the body of the condemned prisoner, passed between him and Mr. Johnson—and the formality was complete. The murderer was now in the hands of the sheriff: he, with a nod, consigned him to the executioner, Mat Cowlis; who with fiend-like impatience, stood at the back of the crowd, contemplating his prey.

No sooner did the warrener recognize the hangman, than his huge frame became convulsed: he tried in vain to speak or move—but terror had so strangely fascinated him, that tongue and limbs alike were paralyzed. Before the wretched man could recover his self-possession, Mat, with the dexterity which long experience gave him, had securely pinioned his arms behind his back.

"That will do nicely!" he whispered in the ear of the murderer, as he finished the preliminaries of his horrid task.

Sideler uttered a deep groan.

"Give him a little brandy," said the surgeon of the prison, who was present.

"Better not, sir," whispered Mat; "it

only prolongs their sufferin's: we never does it in London.

Anthony Skinner gave the signal to advance.

"Not yet, sir!" said the hangman, who felt like an epicure, toying with his pleasures; "he ain't quite ready!"

"Be speedy!" exclaimed Mr. Johnson, eyeing the ruffian sternly—for he recollects the scene in court upon the trial—"and remember that this is neither the time nor place for levity!"

"Certainly not, sir!"

With great deliberation, which was not at all affected—for his hands trembled so with pleasure that he could scarcely use them—the hangman proceeded to remove the neckerchief from the throat of his victim. Having done so, he put it carefully into his pocket, and next proceeded to turn down his shirt collar: in doing which he contrived, playfully as it were, to touch the throat of the warrener—who no sooner felt the contact of his fingers, than he uttered a loud yell.

"I won't be hanged by him!" he shouted, his iron-gray hair bristling at the same time over his clammy brow. "It will be murder—I tell you it will be murder!"

"All ready, gentlemen!" said Mat, in a quiet, serious tone, as if the exclamations of the prisoner were a matter of course.

Again the order to move was given. The chaplain commenced the burial service, and Will Sideler, more dead than alive, was carried, rather than led, by a turnkey on either side of him, towards the scaffold.

Mat Cowls followed close behind him—the fatal cord in his hand. So delightful did the whole affair appear to him, that it was with the greatest difficulty he repressed his usual chuckle.

"Hats off!" exclaimed several voices in the crowd, as the sound of the great bell of the prison vibrated solemnly in the air.

"Is he a comin'?" demanded Ralph.

"Silence, boy!" said a respectable man who was near to him, who felt disgusted at his eagerness.

There was a murmur of something like disappointment amongst the people when Mat Cowls appeared upon the scaffold to adjust the rope. They had fully expected to see the sheriff; and felt almost angry at the miser for not performing the office.

"That be he!" said Ralph; "that be he!" as the warrener, looking deadly pale, was dragged upon the scaffold. The terrified wretch had recovered something like courage at the last moment, and struggled fearfully.

"How he do fight for life, to be sure! This be better sport than the rats of Mortlake!"

The assistants of the dreadful scene held the prisoner—who yelled and shrieked the while—firmly under the beam, whilst Mat threw the noose over his head. The excitement of the populace became terrible; and they answered the yells of the murderer with cries as loud and piercing.

"That will do!" said Mat, quietly, to the turnkeys. "You may go down; I can finish the rest!"

"But the cap?"

The hangman drew it from his pocket.

"All right!" he said. "I know my business!"

No sooner did the warrener hear the discordant cries of the mob, than he became suddenly calm. His eyes wandered over the upturned sea of human faces, and even on the brink of eternity, a bitter curse escaped him!

"That's right!" whispered Mat, drawing the cap over his face. "Curse away! Prayers are of no use to you now! Good bye! Remember *my peculiar knot—I shan't forget it!*"

With these words the wretch descended from the scaffold, and stood waiting to withdraw the bolt the instant the chaplain should drop the white handkerchief which he was holding in his hand. He had not long to wait: the signal was speedily given, and the murderer launched into the presence of that awful Judge, whose laws he had so perseveringly mocked and braved. His struggles were long and fearful. Even the mob, who had welcomed his appearance on the scaffold with delight, began to feel disgust and pity. The cry of "Shame—shame!" was loud and general.

"Rascal!" said the governor to Mat, who stood quietly enjoying the scene, "you shall answer for this!"

"It ain't my fault!" growled the ruffian. "What did he resist for? I would have hanged him comfortably enough, if he had only let me!"

The struggles of the dying man still continued, and the yells of the populace became absolutely terrific.

"We shall have a riot!" observed the sheriff, looking very pale.

The hangman felt it necessary to make some attempt to complete his hideous work. With the agility of a cat, he climbed up the scaffold till he reached the legs of the warrener, which he seized with both his hands, and swung on them till he was dead!

No sooner was the disgusting scene over, than Mat Cowls left the prison by a private door, whilst the populace were still gazing on the gibbet, from which the body had been removed. He was never more seen in the ancient city of Norwich.

The crowd slowly dispersed, many of them impressed with sadder thoughts and better feelings than when they congregated; others with that brutal levity which no lesson can teach, or example, however terrible, reform.

Amongst the former was Red Ralph. The boy was not naturally bad. He was ignorant; but, ignorant as he was, the scene had made a lasting impression upon him, and he afterwards confessed to his patron, Joe Beans, that if he had known a prayer he should have repeated it when he saw his old enemy the warrener struggling on the gallows.

CHAPTER LIV.

Women are worse or better far than men—
Creatures of heaven and earth, so strangely mixed.
When good predominates, like angels sent,
They teach us Eden was not all a fable.
When ill, they fix the sullen sceptic's creed—
For who could trust in Paradise, doubting
Their faith?

HEIR OF THE SEPT.

COLONEL and **Lady Mowbray** were seated in the drawing-room of the mansion which they had lately taken in Berkley Square—at the period of our tale one of the most fashionable localities in London. The recent events at Carrow—the arrival in England of the much slandered widow of Sir William, armed with a mother's wrongs, a mother's claim—together with the exposure of their unworthy treatment of Ellen, had considerably shaken the confidence which they had hitherto felt in the security of their position. More than once the gentleman expressed a disposition to retire to the continent, and abandon the game which something whispered was hopeless. His evil genius, in the form of the bold, bad woman he had married, still urged him to persevere.

"Ridiculous!" she exclaimed, each time that he alluded to the taking of such a step. "Renounce, like a timid girl, the fortune you have played so boldly for! Dispute it to the last! Meenan and his wretched accomplice are both dead, without breathing a word which can implicate you!"

"They could not do so!" replied her husband; "I am innocent of all participation in their crime."

"In act, certainly!"

"Not a word ever passed between us on the subject," added the colonel, with increased earnestness.

For several minutes her ladyship regarded him with an expression of undisguised contempt; not for the paltry equivocation he had uttered, but for the weakness he had shown in supposing he could deceive her.

"There are deeds," she answered, "which require no compact, written or spoken—but it is not the less implied; your brother's death was one of them! You may deceive the world—youself—but not me! Instead, therefore, of a vindication no less ridiculous than unnecessary, call up your energies to the task of defeating the machinations of those who would dispossess you of the fruit of your crimes!"

"Crimes?" repeated the cold-hearted man of the world.

"Colonel Mowbray!" exclaimed his wife, impatiently; "there are very few persons to whom I express what I really think or feel—and you are one of them! If I call things by their right names, it is that we may the better understand each other: a truce to affection, and let us consider the best means of achieving our aims! Your brother's widow has returned to England!"

"Yes; you know she has!"

"With the means of proving her innocence?"

"Beyond the possibility of a doubt!" replied her husband. "Lucas deceived her with a trumped-up tale of Sir William's being obliged to fly to the continent, in consequence of a duel with a political opponent, and having commissioned him to conduct her to him. When the mask fell, and she discovered his true purpose, she vindicated her honor, by one of those terrible acts which—"

"I know—I know!" interrupted the lady, impatiently. "She killed the silly fellow for his pains! The worst of it is, that it invests her with a certain degree of interest. Her story has created quite a sensation—her own family have taken up the question warmly. The principal families in town besiege Devonshire House with their visits. But what has that to do with us—or rather with you?" she added; "were you in any way a party to the attempt of Lucas?"

"No!"

Lady Mowbray regarded him fixedly.

"At least," he added, "no proof exists that I was in any way a party to it!"

"Which is much the same thing!" answered the female Machiavell. "As for the rest, n'importe—you can settle that with your own conscience! What can you possibly fear?"

"Public opinion may—"

His wife shook her head incredulously: she knew that he had long since callously braved it. "Well, then," replied the colonel, who found that it was useless to attempt mincing the question further, "immediately after the death of Captain Lucas, and the temporary insanity of his victim, his brother, the abbot, sent the child to England."

"To you?"

"Yes; and, like a fool, I acknowledged the arrival of the boy, in a letter which I wrote to the priest: which letter the influence of the Duchess of Devonshire with his superiors in Rome has obtained."

"This is an unfortunate!" observed the lady, with the air of an Old Bailey lawyer taking instructions from some prisoner whom he was employed to defend. "How could you be so imprudent?"

Colonel Mowbray looked as if he felt that it was imprudent.

"And what became of the brat?" coolly inquired his wife. "But I need not ask; doubtless it was a sickly child—pined for its mother, perhaps, and died?"

There was a terrible meaning in her glance, as she pronounced the word *died*! The blood of the miserable man ran cold as he heard it—for it displayed in its true light the character of the friend to whom he had linked his destiny.

"No, madam!" he exclaimed; "it did not die! Bad as the opinion you entertain of me is, I am incapable of taking the life of an infant!"

"Doubtless you contented yourself with abandoning it to the tender mercies of the world!" observed her ladyship, with a sneer: "to starve, or be bred up a thief, as accident might determine!"

"Neither one nor the other, Lady Mowbray!"

"Then you are a greater fool than even I imagined!" exclaimed his wife, impetuously. "Where is he?"

"Dead!"

"Dead?" she repeated, joyfully.

"Murdered!" continued the wretched man.

"Hush!" whispered the female fiend; "not so loud—such words should be breathed only in the ear of the dead!"

"I have nothing to fear!" continued her husband. "You yourself heard the young fellow whom my brother's mad partiality designed for the hand of Ellen, relate the manner of his death. Walter Mowbray, whom the world so long considered my son, was in reality my nephew; as my heir he would, in the course of nature, have succeeded me in the title and estates; so that you see, after all, my crime has been less than you imagined!"

Lady Mowbray regarded him for some moments in silence; there was a smile of incredulity upon her lip. It was evident that she did not believe one word of the story he had uttered. It is one of the characteristics of an evil nature never to give the world credit for being better than it had imagined it. Her husband read the thought which was passing in her mind, and, walking towards a cabinet at the opposite end of the room, opened and drew from it two papers bearing the seals and signatures of the British consul at Nice. One was a certificate of the death and burial of his first wife, who had died there; the other of their infant son. He placed the documents before her, and requested her to peruse them.

"Well, madam!" he said, after she had slowly perused them, and carefully examined the writing and official seals; "I trust you are convinced?"

"Not in the least!" replied the lady, coolly; "but I shall act as though I were. As for your secret, keep it—I have no wish to share it: these papers will answer my purpose."

"Is it possible that you still doubt?"

"A true, colonel!" interrupted his wife. "I cannot push my complaisance any further than to appear to credit the statement you have made! I witnessed your surprise, when Henry Ashton first suggested the idea that Walter was the son of your late brother. But it will do!" she added, thoughtfully; "it will do! Armed with such proofs we may defy them!"

"On my nephew's account I am perfectly easy," replied her husband. "Our treatment of Ellen—the attempt made to force her into a marriage with Meenan Hafaz—"

"May be explained," said her ladyship; "at least we have the Chancellor in our favour. I have good reason to believe that he is most indignant at any one having presumed to withdraw her from the

guardian which he had appointed, and insists, before he will hear any application on the subject, that she once more places herself under our authority. His lordship is a man of doubt and precedent," she added, with a smile, "and will only proceed according to rule. Ellen once more in our hands, we can make what terms we please with our friends."

Shortly after the above conversation, Mrs. Captain Herbert and Major Mottram were announced. It was the first meeting of mother and daughter since the death of Meera Hafaz.

"Show Mrs. Herbert to my boudoir, and the major to the library," said her ladyship to the footman, who handed her the cards upon a salver; "I must speak seriously with Isabel," she mentally added; "this flirtation with Mottram is growing serious!"

So saying, she left the room to receive her daughter.

About half an hour afterwards a message was sent to the major, to say that Lady Mowbray being unwell, Mrs. Herbert would remain and pass the day with her. The gentleman immediately adjourned to the club, to meet his friend George Herbert.

"Isabel," said her mother, as soon as they were seated in the tastefully arranged boudoir of the latter; "you know that I never object to a little harmless flirtation—it is the privilege of our sex, especially when married; but there is a point beyond which—"

"I know, mamma," interrupted her daughter, petulantly, "all that you would say about the world's opinion, George, duty, and the long list of moral et ceteras, which every one believes in, but few people observe; but spare me to-day, for I am really very, very unhappy!"

"What could you expect," replied the philosophic parent, marrying a poor man?"

"It is not that. George is becoming so indifferent—so cold!"

Her ladyship shrugged her shoulders with something like an air of contempt.

"You have been married more than three months," she observed.

"Well, mamma?"

"Love in that time," continued Lady Mowbray, "generally subsides into respect. True, I have known *la grande passion* last a year, or even more; but in your case, you ought not to expect it."

"And why not?" demanded the young wife.

"Because George has sacrificed a princely fortune on your account. Like all men, he is extremely selfish, and sure to regret it."

"But I love him!" said Isabel, bursting into tears; "devotedly, truly!"

Again, her ladyship shrugged her shoulders; but this time there was an expression of incredulity in her air. She could not reconcile the declaration of her daughter's love for her husband and her flirtation with his friend, Major Mottram.

"And the major?" she said, with a smile.

"A dear, good fellow!" exclaimed her daughter; "and not at all the kind of person you imagine: he sees George's neglect, and sympathises with me. Our flirtation is only a little plot between us to make George jealous—nothing more."

"A dangerous game, Isabel—a dangerous game!" observed her mother, in a serious tone.

More than once during the day the young wife felt inclined to confide to her parent the project of her pretending to elope with the major, in order to test the affection of her husband; but the dread of her ladyship's satirical humour prevented her. Had she done so, Lady Mowbray's prudence would have taken the alarm, and the misery of her future life in all probability been prevented.

Isabel was full of hopeful confidence in the success of her stratagem: she fancied that within the last few days she had detected symptoms—unequivocal symptoms—of jealousy in the captain. Poor girl! how little did she know him; the heartless egotist was only acting!

Leaving Lady Mowbray and her daughter to their *tete-a-tete*, we must accompany Major Mottram to his club, where he had gone in search of Captain Herbert. He found the ex-guardian smoking a cigar in one of the conversation rooms.

"So soon back!" he observed, as his obliging friend made his appearance. "Anything occurred between you and Isabel?"

"Although the question was carelessly asked, to a

nice observer like the major, it was evident that the speaker attached considerable interest to the reply.

"She remains to dine with Lady Mowbray, who is ill."

"Humph!" ejaculated the captain; "if Isabel should be fool enough to tell her mother of the intended elopement, the affair is at an end: the artful woman would see through it in an instant! I don't know any other woman in town who could have hooked Mowbray as she has done. See here," he added, passing the *Morning Post* to his friend; "we have no time to lose."

The paragraph to which he pointed, was headed—"Approaching Marriage in High Life. We understand that the gallant General Bouchier, who is about to be united to the lovely and accomplished daughter of the rich Indian director, Sir Jasper Pepper, has taken a noble mansion in St. James' Square, which is being fitted up in the most superb style. Report estimates the fortune of the bride at above a million. The happy bridegroom himself is immensely rich. His marriage will make him one of the wealthiest commoners in England."

"This looks serious!" observed the major, laying down the paper; "do you think the affair too far advanced to permit him to retract?"

His friend assured him that he was perfectly satisfied on that point.

"And the lady?"

"Will not object to exchange an old husband for a young one!" replied the captain. "As for my uncle, the exchange will be a positive relief to him. I know that he despises the idea of marriage—he is so intensely selfish. I hate selfish men!"

The gravity with which this was uttered, slightly moved the risible muscles of Major Mottram, who had a keen perception of the ridiculous. It was finally arranged, that if Isabel could be persuaded, the pretended elopement should take place on the following evening.

"Do you think she will consent?" inquired her husband, with an anxious look.

"I have no doubt of it!" replied his confederate. "I have succeeded in exciting her imagination—painted to her your transports, and repentance for your past neglect, when we confess our little plot to reclaim you. Excite a woman's imagination," he added, "and you may persuade her to anything. Besides, she looks upon me as her sincere friend."

"You will write me the letter?"

"It is written," said the Major, handing it to him. "I think that will do—you can glance it over; but my valet had better deliver it to you."

Herbert nodded assent.

"What do you think of it? The touch of conscience and remorse at having violated your hospitality and friendship was well put in!"

"Very!"

"There will be no mistaking the inference?"

"Impossible!" said the philosophic husband. "By heavens, Mottram, you are the best friend I ever had! Let's see—I am to overtake you, with my witnesses, the first stage on the Dover Road?"

"Yes."

"Don't you think," he added, carelessly, "that we had better fight? It will give a tone to the thing—the world will expect it of us; only you must act the generous," he added, in a confidential tone, "and fire in the air. I shouldn't like to run any risk. I know your reputation as a shot."

The last observation was adroitly put in. Major Mottram was an excellent shot—one who practised daily with his weapons, in order to achieve a reputation sufficient to deter any one from calling him out—for in heart he was a coward. Suspected, if not known as such, the opportunity of retrieving his character for courage by a sham duel, was too tempting to be resisted: he caught like a gudgeon at the bait.

"You need not be alarmed!" he said.

"I am not in the least," answered the captain, with a smile: "my death would not only deprive you of your *bet* of twenty thousand pounds, but hamper you with a woman whom you don't care a straw about! No—no!" he mentally added; "I am quite sure that Mottram will not shoot me!"

From the above conversation, it was evident that the reserve with which they had at first approached the subject—the veil which, under the mask of a bet, covered but did not conceal their mutual base-

ness—had long since disappeared; and they talked over the affair in the most business-like manner.

Herbert saw that his friend was beginning to reflect: probably some observation of his had struck him, and he had his own private reasons for diverting the current of his thoughts.

"You must not return to England," he said, "till after the divorce."

"Of course not!"

"And my second marriage."

"Make yourself perfectly easy on that score!" replied the major; "the probability is, that I shall never mix in society in England again."

Herbert thought so, too. But the reasons on which they had come to the conclusion were widely different.

At last the two worthies, after dining together, parted. The major to escort Isabel back to her cottage ornee at Richmond, and Captain Herbert, as he said, to pass away a few hours at the opera. Although the theatre was crowded, and Catalani in magnificent voice, the music had lost its charm. Calling for a hackney-coach, he entered it, and directed the man to drive to an obscure alley in Holborn.

"Sixty-three, I believe," he said.

"Ay—ay, sir!" replied the driver; "I know it—shooting-gallery over the door!"

CHAPTER LV.

Since laws were made for every degree,
To curb vice in others as well as in me;
I wonder we ain't better company,
On Tyburn tree.

THE BEGARS' OPERA.

GREAT and general was the sympathy felt in fashionable circles for the widow Lady Mowbray, whose romantic adventures, sufferings, and wrongs were the theme of conversation in the drawing-rooms and salons of the metropolis. Many who had known her as the blooming wife of Sir William, were inexpressibly shocked at the ravages which grief, more than the hand of time, had made in her once lovely features. The circle of which she had once been one of the brightest ornaments, had it been permitted, would have welcomed her return with pleasure, eager to atone for the involuntary wrong its former judgment had inflicted; but every attempt to woo her back to society was made in vain. True, the poisoned arrow which had so long rankled in her heart was withdrawn—but the wound remained. The only pleasure she appeared to experience, was in the society of our hero and Ellen. She would sit with them for hours, planning bright schemes for their future happiness. At times she almost forgot her own bereavements in the contemplation of their felicity.

Dr Orme had consulted the most eminent members of the bar, as to the steps necessary to be pursued in order to establish his legal right of guardianship to the person of the orphan. All agreed that the first step must be to conform to the previous order of the Chancellor, and restore her to Colonel Mowbray. The next, to petition for a hearing of the case.

It was in vain that the worthy rector urged her uncle's will, and the infamous manner in which the trust had been abused. The gentlemen of the long robe shook their heads, and advised him to submit. They did not know the quiet but determined character of their client; who resolved, rather than Ellen should even for an hour return to the house of the colonel, to unite her in marriage himself with his adopted son, and send them both abroad till the majority of the heiress should release her from all future persecution on the subject.

"He can but imprison me for contempt!" argued the rector. "So that they are happy, I care but little what can happen to myself."

With this heroic resolution, on the morning of the day preceding the one on which Ellen and himself were to appear before the Chancellor, the speaker directed his steps towards Devonshire House, where the orphan and the widow of Sir William were both on a visit to the warm-hearted dowager. He had already made himself an especial favourite with her grace, and was determined to ask her opinion, before he definitely decided on the step he meditated.

He found the ladies in the drawing-room of the

duchess, and Henry Ashton with them. Her son-in-law, the duke, who had hardly come into possession of his immense estates and the accumulations of his minority, was a year or two older than our hero. Even royalty bowed to the *prestige* of his colossal fortune; he was a frequent guest at Carlton House, where play was carried on to a fearful extent. The garter which his grace ultimately obtained, would have been amply paid for, even though George IV. had given him the collar and jewel in diamonds.

Ellen involuntarily drew closer to the side of her lover, when she saw the expression of grief and disappointment in the face of Dr Orme: instinctively she guessed the cause.

"Alas!" she murmured, "our trials are not over yet!"

"Have you seen the lawyers?" inquired the duchess.

"I have, your grace," replied the rector; "and although they entertain no doubt that the Chancellor will ultimately reverse his decree, and confirm the will of my lamented friend, appointing me the guardian of his niece, they are equally of opinion that for a few days, at least, she must submit to the authority of Colonel Mowbray."

"Not for an instant," said our hero, passionately, "shall Ellen be again exposed to the machinations of that bold, bad man, and his yet more artful wife—my heart would rather consume in its own impatience! Is this the boasted justice of England?" he added; "that their dearest rights must be violated to maintain an idle form—an empty dignity! The Chancellor must hear reason!"

"He will listen only to law and precedent," observed his aged friend; "every thought, action, and feeling of his life is regulated by them! The fixity of his ideas is only to be equalled by the obstinacy of his temper; he ought to have been chancellor to the Medes and Persians," he added bitterly; "where the laws were unchangeable as himself! I see but one way of avoiding the painful effect of his decree."

"There is a way, then?" exclaimed Henry Ashton, eagerly. "Bless you, my dear sir—bless you—for those few words; they have removed a weight of agony from my heart!"

The orphan looked towards the venerable rector, and smiled; the transition from terror to hope on her pale countenance was like a cloud passing from the face of nature, or a sunbeam suddenly falling on a gloomy picture. Little did she divine the means proposed. His explanation covered her cheeks with blushes, and added a fresh charm to her beauty.

"Ellen," said the old man, taking her kindly by the hand, "I am sure you will not for an instant suppose me capable of giving the sanction of my character and sacred office to a step which propriety or female delicacy opposed. It is impossible that you should return to the protection of Colonel Mowbray. I feel that every risk ought to be encountered rather than that! Give Henry, then, a husband's right to protect you—I will myself perform the ceremony. Lady Mowbray and the duchess will no doubt sanction it with their presence. The instant it is concluded," he added, "you must both start for the continent, and remain abroad till of age—when the authority of the Chancellor will cease."

The instant our hero heard the word "marriage," he fell upon his knees, and passionately and eloquently implored the orphan to listen to the counsel of her guardian—confirm his happiness, and place a barrier between it and the plottings of her uncle and the unprincipled woman who bore his name.

Poor Ellen was bewildered: her heart secretly responded to his prayer; but that instinctive delicacy which is the best safeguard of the sex, whispered to her that the world might condemn her precipitation.

"No—no!" she murmured; "it is not thus we ought to unite our destiny!"

The appeal of her lover became more earnest. He promised to be all that a devoted affection and gratitude for the sacrifice could inspire; painted in colors vivid and terrible the character of Colonel Mowbray and his lady—whose past conduct proved how little scruples they would prove for the future.

It is hard—very hard—to resist the prayers of

those we love, especially when the pleadings of our own heart second the supplications. Ellen turned towards her aunt, and, hiding her blushes in her arms, whispered:

" Decide for me—I cannot speak!"

" I must decide for you," said the duchess smiling; " the resource which the rector proposes is a resource—but it must be the last! Do not interrupt me," she added, turning to our hero, who looked at her reproachfully. " I know beforehand all that you can say—all that you would urge—but I repeat my opinion: if this hasty marriage can be avoided, it ought to be. We are not now in Italy, but in sober, proper England—where Ellen, from her name and fortune, must one day hold no undistinguished place in society: let us respect even its prejudices—harsh as they may seem, they are sometimes the safeguard to virtue."

" Duchess—duchess!" exclaimed Henry Ashton, " you have destroyed my happiness!"

" Not so," replied her grace, good-humouredly; " perhaps I have only postponed it! Patience is a quality which your sex so seldom exercise voluntarily, that it does them a positive service to impose it. Remember, I do not positively disapprove of this hasty marriage; I only say that it must not take place till every other means have failed; but Lady Mowbray has not yet tried what her influence can do to serve you!"

" My influence," repeated the widow, with a sigh; " alas! what can my influence effect?"

" Much," answered her grace, " if you choose to exert it. Previous to your marriage, you were lady of honor to her majesty?"

" True."

" Who, since your return to England, and the exposure of the infamous plot of which you were the victim, has graciously expressed not only her sympathy but willingness to receive you. I will accompany you to Buckingham House," added the speaker, " demand an audience—which, as a peeress of England, I am entitled to—present you to her majesty—solicit her interference—private of course—with this odious Chancellor. Should she graciously promise it, rely upon it, his lordship, with all his lavish love of precedent, law, and etiquette, will not venture to refuse her request."

" But should her majesty refuse?"

" In that case," replied the duchess, " I will use what little influence I possess over the mind of my young friend to accede to the project of the rector."

It required all the strong affection which Lady Mowbray felt for her orphan niece, and the interest she entertained for the happiness of Henry Ashton, to reconcile her to the extraordinary step of appearing once more in the presence of majesty.—Her long seclusion from the world had made her both timid and nervous. She at last, however, assented—to the satisfaction of our hero, who, despite his ardent passion for Ellen, and natural impatience to call her, was yet too generous and right-minded not to see the propriety of the alternative which the duchess proposed.

The rector and his adopted son shortly after took their leave; but not till the latter had whispered in the ear of the blushing girl his thanks for the implied promise she had given of accepting his hand at once, should circumstances render such a step necessary, to avoid the hated authority of her unnatural relative.

At the period of which we write, the unpopularity of the Prince Regent was at its height. The heartless egotist had disgusted the moral, and, we may add, the national feeling of England, by his unmanly persecution of his unhappy wife. The aged queen, his mother, shared in the odium, from the decided part she had taken against her daughter-in-law.

Charlotte of Mecklenburg, queen of George III., was one of those persons whose virtues and vices were of a negative, rather than a positive character. During the time she occupied the throne, the court became parished from the gross immorality which disgraced the two previous reigns. It is a well-known fact, that she refused to receive the Margravine of Ansbach at the drawing-room, although requested to do so by the king—on the suspicion of that lady having, whilst Lady Craven, lived with his serene highness as his mistress. Parliament, on the declared insanity of her husband, appointed her to the guardianship of his person; and, to her credit be it spoken, she seldom or ever interfered in

politics. Her chief pleasure was to save money, which she regularly remitted to her poor relations in Germany. By the nobility of England she was respected, but not liked; by the people her majesty was both respected and hated.

" There has been a drawing-room to-day, I perceive," observed Dr. Orme to our hero, as he passed down Constitution Hill, after leaving Devonshire House; " see how the park is thronged."

At any other time his companion would have been amused at the crowd of splendid equipages and groups of pedestrians assembled in the park. Many of the latter expressed their disapproval of the policy of the government of the day in no very measured terms, and hissed or applauded the various political personages as they passed, according to their adherence or opposition to the measures of the cabinet. Lords Sidmouth and Castlereagh came in for the most virulent demonstrations of public feeling. The former bore it with easy indifference, scarcely appearing to notice it; the latter, less master of his feelings, perhaps, with anger and ill-disguised contempt.

The garden-gate of St. James's opened, and a party of the yeomen of the guard appeared, bearing a sedan-chair, surmounted by the crown. It was followed by the gentlemen of the household of her majesty, who was returning from the drawing room to Buckingham House: not the patry gew-gaw of the present day—but the plain, old-fashioned brick building, which George III. purchased as a residence for his queen, and afterwards sold to the nation—making a profit of thirty thousand pounds by the transaction.

There was a cry of "the queen—the queen!" from the mob, many of whom began to hiss, and press round the chair.

" Gracious heavens!" exclaimed the rector, " it is her majesty! See, the people are insulting her!"

" Hoo, snuffy! who killed the princess?" roared several of the most daring of the crowd—for an idea generally prevailed amongst the lower orders, that the lamented heiress of the crown had been poisoned, and that her grandmother was no stranger to the transaction.

The mob are generally most credulous where the horrible and improbable are concerned. There are few things too monstrous for their gullibility to swallow.

A stone was thrown, which struck the gilded crown on the top of the sedan-chair. There were one or two cri's of "Shame—shame!" from the few respectable persons who were present; but their protestations against the outrage were drowned in the storm of yells and hisses which followed.

No sooner did Henry Ashton perceive that the queen was really in danger, than he left the side of his companion, and made his way through the dense crowd, which began seriously to impede the progress of the bearers. By dint of great exertion, he reached the side of the chair; as he did so, a second stone struck him upon the temple, and inflicted a cut not sufficiently deep to deprive him of his senses or self-possession, although it caused the blood to trickle down his indignant, animated features.

" Shame!" he said. " I blush to believe that you are Englishmen! Is this the way you treat an illustrious, aged lady, whose life has been a pattern to the mothers and daughters of England?"

" Listen to the aristocrat!" cried one.

" Down with him!" roared several others.

To the astonishment of the mob, the yeomen of the guard, who were carrying the sedan, stopped—and her majesty, letting down the glass, showed herself to them distinctly. Her countenance was pale, but firm; it was perhaps the only occasion, during her long life, on which Queen Charlotte displayed both courage and dignity.

" Why do you insult me?" she demanded. " I am more than seventy years old, and for upwards of fifty years have been Queen of England! What action of my life has merited such treatment?"

Again the cry of "Shame!" was renewed. The few respectable persons present, taking courage from the firm tone of the aged speaker, began to gather round the chair.

A cry was raised that the Guards were coming, and the most violent of the mob, as is usual with them in such cases, immediately took to their heels.

Many noblemen, officers, and gentlemen returning from the drawing-room, alighted from their

carriages, and, drawing their swords, joined themselves to the escort of her majesty, whom they accompanied to Buckingham House.

We can assure our readers that the outrage we have described is not the mere imagination of the writer; it really occurred on the occasion and in the manner narrated. We have given the words of Queen Charlotte literally, without exaggeration or addition.

On alighting from her chair, her majesty returned her thanks to those who had voluntarily formed themselves into an escort for her protection, and, taking the arm of her vice-chamberlain, who was in waiting to receive her, began slowly to ascend the great staircase; when, suddenly recollecting herself, she stopped, and directed one of the officers of her household to ask the name of her defender, and express a hope on her behalf that he was not seriously hurt.

"My name is Henry Ashton," replied our hero.

"A gentleman?" demanded the messenger—who, like most of the attendants of the old queen, was a German.

The reply was made by giving the querist his card, on which—in addition to his name, "Attache to the British Legation at Naples" was written.

"Ah! very well!" exclaimed the officer, after slowly reading it; "I am glad you do not belong to de horrid peoples! Mine Gott! to tink dey should insult a queen, and not shoot dem—rascal traitors!"

Henry was too little of a courtier and too much of an Englishman to coincide with the surprise of the speaker: he therefore bade him good morning, and returned to the park, to seek for the worthy rector, whom he fortunately encountered close to the palace.

"Good heavens!" exclaimed his anxious friend, "you are hurt!" "A scratch—I scarcely feel it! Nothing more, believe me!"

"How did it occur?"

His protege related everything that had taken place.

The rector thought the affair of sufficient importance to be instantly communicated to the duchess—who, with that ready tact which distinguished her, saw in an instant how it might be turned to the advantage of the lovers.

No sooner did the Prince Regent hear of the outrage which had been offered to his mother, than he commanded a strong detachment of the Foot Guards to take up their quarters at Buckingham House, where many of the ministers and nobility called to express their indignation and abhorrence at the insult offered to the wife of their sovereign. Amongst the latter the Duchess of Devonshire and Lady Mowbray. From the high rank of the former, they were at once admitted to the presence of her majesty.

"Ah, Lady Mowbray!" said the queen; "we are happy once more to see you, and assure you of our sympathy at your unmerited sufferings! Should we live to hold another drawing-room," she added, "it will afford us pleasure, by seeing you publicly, to express our feelings towards you!"

Although the august speaker listened with patience to the tale of the duchess—for she was a great lover of gossip—she was too much ruffled with the adventure of the day to promise the slightest interference on behalf of the lovers.

"I can do nothing," she said, relapsing into her usual broken English—which she did when her style became conversational, or she was very much out of temper. "My Lord Liverpool has just left me, and he says that government can do nothing—absolutely nothing—unless dey catch de ruffian, dat threw de stones at my chair!"

"Perhaps the lover of Miss De Vere," observed her grace, "can point out the man."

"Who?" demanded her majesty, sharply.

"The lover of Miss De Vere," repeated the duchess; "the gentleman who had the happiness of being of some slight service to your majesty, and was wounded by one of the mob!"

"His name, duchess—his name?"

"Mr. Henry Ashton!"

"Ah, yea! dat is his name!" replied the aged queen; "and he, you say, is de young gentleman you speak of! Well—well! I shall find dat I am not ungrateful: I will speak to de Lord Chancellor!"

At this moment a page entered the royal closet to announce that the first law officer of the crown

had arrived at Buckingham House, and requested permission to offer his respects to her majesty.

"I will see him in de green drawing-room. Remain here, duchess," she added, as she rose from her seat to leave the apartment; "I will not detain you long."

Contrary to her promise, nearly an hour elapsed before her majesty made her re-appearance. When she did so, both the ladies observed that her countenance was red with anger: knowing the obstinacy of the Chancellor, they feared that even her intercession had failed to shake his resolution—they were mistaken: with all his firmness Queen Charlotte was the more obstinate of the two.

"Has your majesty succeeded?" anxiously and respectfully inquired Lady Mowbray.

"Succeed! humph!" muttered the queen; "de Chancellor is as *stupid* as my Lord Liverpool! He talk of contempt of Chancery—precedent! And when I ask for punishment for de man who insult me, he shrug his shoulders, and say: 'Government can do noting but what de laws permit!'"

"Is it possible?" exclaimed the duchess—who, with infinite tact, displayed more indignation at the indifference, as she expressed it, of the great law officer of the crown to the outrage offered to her majesty, than anxiety on the subject of her request.

"It is true," continued the aged speaker; but I did not forget your friends. You may tell de gentleman, from me, not to fear. Your niece," she added, addressing Lady Mowbray, "will not return to her bad uncle!"

The widow of Sir William knelt and kissed the withered hand graciously extended towards her.

"You may tank me," resumed the queen, "for I had to be *very* sharp with him! It was not till I threatened to give de young lady an appointment in my household—which I know he want for Lady Munton—dat he promise me. De best ting he could do!" added the august speaker, with a smile; "for, once in my service, even my Lord Eldon would pause before he venture to take her from my protection. Dere is no precedent for it!"

Here she laughed heartily at the idea of having checkmated the Chancellor at his own game of precedent and authority.

On the following morning, when Ellen, accompanied by her grace, Dr. Orme, and our hero, appeared before his lordship, to the surprise of the court and mortification of Colonel Mowbray, instead of ordering, as a preliminary, that the heiress should purge herself of the contempt she had incurred, and return to the guardianship of her uncle, he entered at once into the merits of the case. Never had he been known to take so little time in coming to a decision. It was, that—for the present at least—the orphan was to remain under the joint guardianship of the rector and the Dowager Lady Mowbray: bo' of whom, by the terms of the decree, were prohibited from giving their consent to the marriage of their ward, until the validity of the will of the late baronet had been decided in a court of law—or his sanction to such an arrangement should be obtained.

All but Henry and Colonel Mowbray were delighted at the decision. The former saw the bliss he anticipated suddenly postponed to an indefinite period—months—perhaps years; the latter foresaw the exposure and shame which awaited him at the trial of the cause.

"Could I obtain the fatal letter to the Abbate Lucas," he thought, as he left the court, "I might defy them still!"

CHAPTER LVI.

There is no friendship 'twixt dishonest minds.'

OLD PLAY.

DESPITE the warnings of her more experienced mother, Mrs. George Herbert had not abandoned the idea of exciting the jealousy of her husband and testing his affection towards her, by pretending to elope with his friend Major Mottram, whose manner and conversation were so kind, yet passionless, that the imprudent wife placed the most unlimited faith in his friendship and honor. Had the word "love" once escaped his lips, she would have taken the alarm. But no; the cold-blooded, calculating man of the world was too careful to endanger the success

of a scheme which was to put twenty thousand pounds into his pocket.

The fact was that Isabel, like many a young wife and girl, was the victim of her own imagination. Romance had painted to her the alarm and agony of her repentant husband. How delightful it would be to see him once more at her feet; listen to his vows of affection, his protestations for the future, and to confess the little episode she and the major had invented to reclaim him.

Still her heart failed her when the hour arrived to put the plan of the major into execution. Something whispered to her that she was risking her future happiness, and treading upon dangerous ground. Had her adviser displayed the least impatience or disappointment, even at the last moment she had been saved.

On the contrary, he merely laughed at her irresolution; and observed how Herbert would rally her on his return.

"What?" said his dupe, "have you sent the letter?"

"Of course I have, my dear Mrs. Herbert," was the reply; "a most eloquent one, in which I inform him that, moved by the deep interest I feel in your happiness, and shocked at his unworthy conduct towards you, I have prevailed upon you to exchange the protection of his roof for that of mine."

The last consideration decided her. The idea of her feelings being made the sport of her husband, on his return, should he find that she had failed to put her resolution into practice, was galling to her pride—and she entered the carriage with her friend.

"You are sure George will know where to overtake us?" she said.

"Certain; I gave my valet every instruction," answered the gentleman; "he cannot miss us!"

"He will be terribly angry!" added the lady, who began to feel a vague sense of the imprudence of the step she had taken.

"At first, doubtless!" replied the major, carelessly; as if he felt the most assured conviction that all would end as she imagined; "but the warning, when he learns the truth, will not be lost."

"Heaven grant it!" sighed the unhappy wife. And you must forgive him!" continued the artful villain, who had so cleverly plotted, as he fancied, to destroy the happiness and reputation of a defenceless woman—and for what? For gold—for the means of gratifying his luxurious tastes and habits; plotted it coldly and remorselessly. Unfortunately there are but too many such men in the world.

"Oh yes!" replied Isabel, with a faint smile; "I will forgive him!"

"But not too soon—try him a little first!" During this time the carriage continued to roll towards London.

George Herbert was seated in the club-room of the Guards, chatting with several of the officers, when a letter was put into his hands: he read it, and tried to turn pale. It was the one written by Mottram, but very differently worded from the description he had given to his victim: such a letter might not have answered their purpose.

It commenced by declaring, in the most unmistakable language, that, having wronged his friend Captain Herbert in the tenderest part, he could no longer accept his hospitality, and concluded by an announcement that he had withdrawn Mrs. Herbert from his protection.

"Anything the matter, George?" demanded one of the group with whom he had been conversing.

The bereaved husband groaned, and kept up his assumed despair so far as to strike his forehead with his clenched hand. The Guardsmen were astonished: such a circumstance as any display of feeling was most unusual amongst them.

"Poor fellow," whispered one, "he is mad!"

"Or his uncle married!" added a second.

"Read, Ilford—read!" exclaimed the captain, throwing himself into a seat, "I am distracted—advise me how to act!"

"Shoot the fellow, of course!" drawled the young nobleman to whom the appeal was made. "An impudent scoundrel—a fellow from the line—to take such a freedom with one of our regiment! If you require a friend," he added, "dispose of me!"

Herbert pressed his hand.

"We must pursue the fellow at once!" added his lordship.

"Instantly!"

"What route do you imagine he has taken?"

"To Dover, doubtless!"

An hour later, Captain Herbert, accompanied by Lord Ilford and the honourable Cornet Graham, drove from the club-house of the Guards, in the travelling carriage of the peer, as fast as four post-horses could convey them. The window of the reading-room was crowded with Guardsmen to watch their departure.

"What is up?" coolly inquired one of the gentlemen.

"A bet!" demanded another.

"That fellow Mottram," replied one who was better informed than the rest, "has run away with Herbert's wife. A sad affair, after the ridiculous sacrifice he made, too, in marrying her; cost him his uncle's fortune, and compelled him to sell out."

Several present thought it quite as well that he had sold out.

"I am not in the least surprised," observed a lieutenant-colonel of the Blues, who was present. "What can be expected of men who associate with persons from the line?"

"Of course Herbert will shoot him?"

"Possibly!" observed the first speaker; "and yet, after all, it is but the choice of two evils; it will be almost as ridiculous to shoot the fellow as to let it alone."

Here the conversation dropped; the subject was exhausted; the Guards never approving of anything which created a sensation.

"By Jupiter!" observed Major Mottram, looking from the back window of the carriage, as it rolled along the high and pleasant road to Dover; "but George is on our track!"

"Thank heaven!" exclaimed Isabel, who began bitterly to regret the step she had taken.

"Shall we proceed?"

"No—no! stop here at once, and explain all!"

"You must permit me to do that," replied the major; a few words will pacify your husband's anger, and I shall bring him repentant to your feet."

Calling to the postillions, he directed them to draw up by the side of the road; the fellows looked surprised. They expected, on the contrary, to have been directed to proceed at their quickest pace.

"A rum cove, that, Jem!" whispered one.

"Pluck to the back bone!" said the other.

The carriage, with the pursuing party, at last drove up, and stopped within a few paces of the major's. True to the character he had undertaken, he advanced with a bold front towards Captain Herbert, whose countenance appeared distorted with passion.

"Pon my soul," thought his confederate, "but he does it admirably! I never gave him credit before for being such a capital actor!"

"I guess your purpose, Captain Herbert," he said, aloud; "and will not disappoint you! We had better withdraw to some more retired spot; there is a lady in the carriage, whose feelings we would both spare."

"Major Mottram will address himself to me!" lisped his lordship. "I act in this affair as the friend of Captain Herbert."

The preliminaries were soon arranged. The case of pistols was removed from the carriage of the speaker, and the entire party directed their steps towards a little wood at the end of a field by the roadside. It was settled that the honourable Cornet Graham, who in years was a mere boy, should act as second to Mottram.

The seconds examined the pistols.

"Of course you will hit him!" whispered Lord Ilford to the captain, who had already taken his ground.

"I'll try!" was the answer, accompanied by a bitter smile.

"Are you quite ready, Mottram?" demanded Graham, with an air of the most business-like importance.

"Quite!" replied the major, confident in the arrangement between himself and Herbert. "It is not my intention to fire," he added. "Poor George! I have wronged him sufficiently already!"

"Very proper, major!"

"I shall stand and receive his fire as long as he wishes," continued the coward, who rejoiced in the opportunity of securely acting the man of courage. "If I fall, I can trust to your gallantry that no insult shall be offered to the lady!"

"Certainly not. Ilford or I will take care of her."

Isabel no sooner saw the gentlemen quit the high-road, and direct their way over the fields, than her courage failed her. All the consequences of the imprudent step she had taken rushed upon her mind. Instead of seeing her husband penitent, as she anticipated, at her feet, he was engaged in a duel with his best friend—for such she still considered the major.

Springing from the carriage, she hastened to follow them, determined to explain everything, and endure the just ridicule and anger of her husband for her share in the transaction.

"George—George!" she exclaimed, as she approached the ground where the gentlemen—each confident in the result—stood awaiting the signal to fire; "only hear me!"

He did hear her, and looked immediately towards his lordship, who—with his handkerchief in his hand, ready to give the signal—stood equidistant from himself and Mottram.

"I can explain every thing!" shrieked the agonized wife.

"Too late!" thought the major, with a triumphant smile.

"Too late!" mentally repeated her husband. The signal was given, and both parties fired. Mottram—as he had promised—in the air; but somehow or other—we presume accidentally—the bullet of Captain Herbert whistled through the brain of his confederate—that busy brain which had so lately plotted the misery of a fellow-creature.

"Is he dead?" demanded the successful duellist of Cornet Graham, who looked very pale. "Poor fellow! it was his first affair of honour!"

"Quite dead!" he replied.

"Then I am satisfied."

"George! what have you done?" demanded his wife, who, pale and breathless, approached the spot. "Murdered your best friend!"

The captain coolly bowed, and, taking the arm of his second, left the ground.

Then it was that all the horror of her position broke upon the mind of Isabel.

CHAPTER LVII.

Home, whispered in some foreign scene,
Sweetly it falls upon the ear,
Like fairy visions that have been,
Or mournful music floating near.

ROBIN GOODFELLOW.

The morning after the interview between the dower Lady Mowbray, and Queen Charlotte the following announcement appeared in the *Gazette*.

"Her majesty was graciously pleased to receive in private audience at Buckingham House, Lady Mowbray, the widow of the late baronet, on her return to England, after an absence of many years upon the continent."

Unimportant as these few words may appear to most of our readers, to the slandered, outraged wife they were everything. They removed the blush from her matron brow—the stain from her fair fame—they were the highest acknowledgments that could be made of her being worthy to hold a place amongst the matronage of England; for the Queen of George III., with all her eccentricities and faults, admitted no one to her court who had once forgotten the laws of chastity and virtue. So strict was she in this one particular, that she even declined to receive the wife of her own son, the late King of Hanover, at the drawing-room she held soon after her marriage, till the suspicion of her having once formed a *liaison* with the handsome Murat, the brother-in-law of Napoleon, was *explained* or removed.

As all fear of further interference from Colonel Mowbray in the guardianship of Ellen was for the present removed by the decision of the Chancellor, Dr. Orme and the Duchess of Devonshire both earnestly advised the long-exiled widow to take up her abode at Carrow till the trial should come on which was to decide the validity of the will of her husband—it was due, they said, to his memory and the vindication of her fame; still it was not without a severe struggle that the recluse consented to return to the scene of her early wedded happiness and maternal bliss.

It is hard to revisit in age and disappointment the home where the sun of life once shone brightest—to listen in vain for the well-remembered step

—to miss the voice whose tones made music to the heart—the tender look—the smile of sweet affection. The world! what was it to Lady Mowbray?—ashes!—its joys a memory o'ershadowed by a tomb!

"You have obtained a strong influence over me," she observed, in reply to the solicitations of our hero and Ellen. "I could almost imagine, as I hear you, that I listen to voices whose eloquence has long been mute. Your mother," she added, addressing her niece, "was my earliest, dearest friend; how must her heart have been pained by the suppression of my degradation!"

The orphan threw her arms around her, and gently kissed away the tears which dimmed the eyes of the mourner.

It was less easy to account for the influence which Henry Ashton exercised over her; she would frequently start and turn deadly pale at some peculiar tone of his voice or mode of expression which reminded her of Sir William: perhaps the long hours he had passed with his benefactor in the mutual interchange of thought and feeling, had insensibly formed his youthful mind upon the model of his instructor's.

It was finally arranged that Henry should precede the party to Carrow, in order to prepare for their reception, and arrange at the different stages for post-horses and sleeping-rooms; for Lady Mowbray was still too much an invalid to support the journey, even had it been practicable, in one day. Joe Beans accompanied him.

We will pass over the adieus of the lovers, which were marked by tenderness rather than sadness—for they parted with the certainty of meeting again in a few days. Their separation was like one of those clouds which obscure the heavens for a while in the sweet budding time of spring—a shadow with the bright sun of hope peeping through.

The same day on which the above conversation took place, Colonel Mowbray and his wife—the latter her heart overflowing with malignity at the escape of Ellen—were discussing their plans for the future. Gradually the artful woman had obtained, from her bold and resolute character, complete influence over the mind of her husband. If previous to his forced marriage, the gentleman had few scruples of conscience, he at least possessed some prudence; but both prudence and scruples her ladyship had either sneered or reasoned away; the colonel was now a mere tool in her hands—her was the directing spirit which decided on every movement.

"I regret," said the colonel, with a sigh, "that I ever yielded to the promptings of avarice and ambition: my heart was much lighter ere I listened to them."

"But, having listened to them," observed the lady, "and acted on them, none but an idiot would close his ears to their suggestions. There are positions in which it is far more dangerous to recede than to advance—we are in one of them."

"We?" repeated her husband.

"Is not your interest mine?"

"True—true!" sighed the guilty but not repentant man; "our interests are one. Would they were the only bonds between us!" he mused mentally added—for the yoke already began to gall him.

"Oh, men—men!" exclaimed the female Machiavel, "nature has endowed you with the strength—but woman alone possesses the unchangeable and persevering will. Had my spirit been as supine as yours, we should have indeed had no other resource than to abandon the fortune for which you have so long intruded. But whilst you were dreaming of the past, I thought and acted for the future."

"Acted?" repeated the colonel.

"Yes!" resumed his wife; "the means are ready to your hand, if you have the courage to use them."

"The means—explain yourself?"

"What is it you most dread?" she demanded; "is it not the production of that unfortunate letter to the Abbé Lucas, in which you not only admitted receiving your nephew from the hands of his agent, but foolishly, because unnecessarily added, had restored him to his father?"

"You know it is, madam. Why torment me with questions like these?"

"Why does the surgeon probe the wound," answered her ladyship, "unless to cure it? I have ascertained where the letter is."

"In the hands of his lawyer, doubtless?"

"No."

"The Chancellor's, or Dr. Orme's, then?"

"Neither," continued Lady Mowbray, "it is contained in a small ebony box, which every night is the companion of the widow's pillow. She scarcely ever permits it from her sight; but, with the tenacity of a woman's will and a mother's love, guards it with jealous vigilance. Could art, bribery, or anything short of violence have obtained it, long since it would have been mine. As it is, the task remains for you."

"For me! How? you dream! My brother's widow is the guest of the Duke of Devonshire, a man who shuns my acquaintance! I could not find even a pretext to visit him."

"Nor is it necessary that you should!" rejoined his adviser; "since in three days your sister-in-law, together with Ellen and that meddling priest, depart for Carrow. She will doubtless take the papers with her. Once there, you, who know every secret entrance to the house, may easily obtain them."

"Not every entrance!" observed her husband, who, since the late event in the library, felt a superstition dread of returning to the home of his murdered brother.

"Sufficient at least for our purpose. The letter must be obtained at any sacrifice."

"It shall be obtained!" said Colonel Mowbray, firmly.

"That once in your possession, have you ought else to fear?" inquired his wife, fixing a searching glance upon him—for she felt assured that the confidence she obtained was extorted from him by the critical position in which his past duplicity and crimes had placed him.

"Nothing!" he replied; "absolutely nothing!"

Still the lady did not appear convinced.

"No accomplice?" she added; "no confederate?"

"None! The only person who could betray me, is bound by an oath so terrible," said the guilty man, "he would not dare to break it; it was taken years since. I know that he has been strongly tempted, but still my secret will be kept—at least," he added, "whilst I live."

"And in the event of your death?" eagerly demanded Lady Mowbray.

"He would be free to disclose it—provided no son of mine lived to suffer by his indiscretion. Besides, I saved the fellow's life!"

The lady tried to look satisfied, but the effort was a failure. She had as little confidence in human gratitude as in virtue—both to her were but idle names.

The colonel shortly afterwards left the house, to consult with his legal advisers. His first idea had been to avail himself of the error of Henry Ashton, and declare Walter to have been his nephew—not his son; and had procured the certificate of the death of his second child, who died at Nice, to corroborate his statement; but, unfortunately for his scheme, the nurse was still living who had attended his wife in both her confinements, and had fallen into the hands of Lawyer Elworthy. That line of defence, therefore, had been abandoned. The consideration now was to hit upon another.

He had not long left the house before a chaise and four drove up to the door. No sooner was it opened, than the unhappy wife of Captain Herbert, springing past the astonished servants, ran up the stairs like a mad woman. No sooner did she perceive her mother, than she threw her arms round her, and clung to her like a terrified child, beseeching her to save her from George, who was following to murder her.

"Heavens, Isabel!" exclaimed her astonished parent; "what has happened?"

It was long—very long—before she could draw from her wretched child anything like a connected account of what had transpired; the pretended elopement, in order to excite the fast declining passion of her selfish husband—the duel, and the death of Major Mottram.

"Isabel!" said her ladyship, with desperate calmness, "in the eyes of the world you are lost—dishonoured!"

"But not in yours!" interrupted the heart-broken girl; you will believe me! You know how devotedly, madly I loved my husband; how truly, despite his coldness and indifference, I love him still!"

"What matters what I may believe or disbelieve?" snappishly answered the heartless woman

of the world. "I have troubles enough of my own upon my hands, without the addition of yours! That Mottram should have been such a fool!"

The more the speaker reflected, the more she was intrigued. The major had long been known to her by reputation as a man of doubtful character—and but for the fatal termination of the duel, she would at once have suspected a collusion between her son-in-law and his friend; but even her knowledge of mankind did not lead her to suppose the dead man complaisant enough to submit to being shot, merely to enable Captain Herbert to get rid of his wife: for once she was baffled in her calculation.

"You will be divorced!" she said, bitterly, after a pause.

At the word "divorce," the despair and distress of Isabel increased: neither the neglect nor fatuity of her husband as yet had shaken her affection for him. She implored her mother to write to him—to entreat him to see her—to listen to her vindication—assuring her that she could explain everything.

"He will listen to no explanation," answered her ladyship, decidedly; "he will only feel too happy at the occasion your imprudence has given him of breaking a tie which your ridiculous love and his vanity kuit—when I had such a brilliant match for you, too, on the *tapis*!" she added, with an air of vexation.

Overcome with excitement and the terrible reality of her position thus unfeelingly forced upon her, the wretched girl fainted. Bad as she was, the wife of Colonel Mowbray was a mother, and the erring Isabel her only child. She would not have been human had not her heart relented at the sight of her sufferings; perhaps, too, conscience whispered in her ear, that her daughter's errors were those of the false education she had given her.

"Isabel, my child!" she exclaimed, as she bent over her; "look up—forgive my harshness! Whatever may befit, you have still a mother!"

Although General Bouchier in the first burst of indignation on the imprudent marriage of his nephew, had resolved to discard him, and, in order to carry out the long-cherished object of uniting his already colossal fortune with the equally splendid one of Sir Jasper Pepper, had offered his own hand as a substitute for the captain's, as the time drew near for the fulfilment of his engagement, he felt much more reluctant to complete it: marriage would interfere with his ideas of comfort—his cherished bachelor independence. In short, it was an inconvenience—and, like most selfish men, General Bouchier hated to be inconvenienced; neither was the heiress of the wealthy little East India director exactly the kind of person—even had he felt inclined to become a Benedict—on whom he would have bestowed his hand and name. She was silly, vain, and undistinguished by those charms, either of person or mind, which render woman the light of our existence.

So far from this distaste moderating his resentment towards his nephew, it only served to augment it. The bitterness of the draught added to his indignation against the man who had refused to take it for him; and he experienced a savage kind of satisfaction in the idea of leaving his long supposed heir a beggar.

"Curse him!" he muttered, as he sat sipping his first glass of claret after a solitary dinner, in the magnificent mansion which he had just taken in contemplation of his approaching union. "He deserves it for his folly!"

His valet, Lebel, entered the room with the evening papers. It was the fellow's duty to peruse them carefully, and mark any scandalous paragraph or *en dit* which he thought would interest his master. General Bouchier saw in an instant, from the marked manner in which the servant placed the *Globe*, doubled at a particular column, before him, that he had seen something more than usually *piquant* or amusing.

"What is this?" he demanded, listlessly. "A duel and elopement in high life, general?" replied the valet respectfully.

"Do I know the parties?" The man could scarcely repress a smile as he answered, that, although the initials of the names only were given, he thought his master might possibly recognize them.

"Read it for me!" said the general, in a listless tone. The fact was, he was thinking, with any-

thing but a lover's rapture, of the daughter of Sir Jasper Pepper.

Lebel, with a countenance unmoved, read as follows :

" ELOPEMENT AND DUEL IN HIGH LIFE.—The wife of Capt. G—e H—t, lately of the Guards, whose recent marriage excited such a sensation in the fashionable world, eloped yesterday, with Major M——m, of sporting celebrity. The injured husband, accompanied by two friends, Lord Il—— and Cornet G——m, overtook the guilty pair on the first stage to Dover. A duel was the consequence, in which the seducer fell, mortally wounded."

It has been frequently said, that no man is a hero to his *vale de chambre*; but General Bouchier was always a gentleman to Lebel. Without moving a muscle of his face, he desired him to leave the paper; saying that when he required him he would ring. "Stay!" he added, as the servant was about to quit the room; "If my nephew should call, tell the porter I am at home."

Lebel bowed, and withdrew. Since his marriage, the general had not only refused to see his nephew, but even suffered his letters to remain unanswered.

Long and varied were the cogitations of the old bachelor when left to himself. He saw at once the chance of escaping from the noose he had been so anxious to impose upon his nephew. With cold-blooded precision he calculated the consequences of the elopement and duel, and fancied them satisfactory. Strange to say, he relished his second glass of claret far better than the first. Occasionally a quiet smile broke over his still handsome features. It was evident something had amused him.

His reveries were disturbed by a servant announcing Captain Herbert.

The ex-guardian entered the room with an air to theatrical to be real. He had even ruffled his cherished curls till they were in a most melo-dramatic state of disorder. He threw himself into a chair in a reckless manner, intending to convey the idea of his being truly wretched.

His uncle contemplated him for a few moments in silence.

"Calm yourself, George!" he said. "You know I dislike anything approaching to a sensation; it is decidedly vulgar!"

"You have heard it all, I suppose?" replied the young man with a tolerable imitation of a groan.

"I have. Take some wine."

The captain assisted himself to a tumbler of claret, and drank it off with considerable gusto for a betrayed and injured husband. It was genuine *Lafitte, premier crus*.

"And so you have shot Mottram?" observed the general, after a second pause.

"I have—through the brain! The wretched man never spoke *after receiving my shot!*"

"Humph!" ejaculated his uncle. "Perhaps it was as well he did not! I always thought the major stronger in the head than the heart! And pray, George, what do you propose to do—fly to the continent?"

"No!"

"Explain yourself!" said the old gentleman, testily. "You know I detest the trouble of asking questions! And be a little more natural, George! These heroics may do all very well for the world; but they are thrown away upon me!"

"I shall remain, and stand my trial!" continued the captain. "I have nothing to fear. I have a confession of his guilt in a letter which he wrote to me previous to his elopement with the unhappy woman whom I must still call my wife!"

"For the present, certainly!" observed the general. "Of course you will sue for a divorce?"

"Instantly!"

"You now perceive the folly you have been guilty of?" observed his relative, "in sacrificing yourself to an ungrateful woman!"

The captain said nothing, but he looked as if he felt convinced that he had made an awful sacrifice.

"You had better see my lawyer, and consult with him what is to be done. By-the-bye, who was your second?"

"Lord Ilford!"

"Good! And Mottram's?"

"Cornet Graham."

"Very correct and proper!" muttered the general, with an air of satisfaction; "nothing to be said on that score. Everything *en règle*. Commence

proceedings instantly for the divorce, and spare no expense. I feel, for the honour of our family, that the guilty woman must no longer bear your name."

"Decidedly not!"

"You will find two thousand to your credit at Coutt's to-morrow," added his uncle; "perhaps you had better leave Mottram's letter with me."

Despite his heartlessness, the ex-guardian's hand trembled as he took the paper from his pocket-book, and presented it to the speaker—who, after carefully perusing it, placed it in a secretary near the window. During the entire interview there was a quiet air of satisfaction in his manner, which convinced Captain Herbert how completely his wealthy relative was reconciled to him. He felt morally assured that he had not sinned in vain.

"Leave me now, George," said General Bouchier, "and let me hear how your affair progresses. If the magistrates require bail, or anything of that kind, send for me and Sir Jasper Pepper. It was my intention to quit town to-morrow—but under present circumstances, I shall postpone my visit."

"You are very kind, and were I only assured that you had forgiven me my foolish marriage—"

"We will speak of that another time," interrupted his uncle. "It was a foolish marriage, but you have done all in your power to atone!"

Captain Herbert regarded him fixedly, and read in his glance that the clever rose he had played was more than suspected by the speaker.

As he was leaving the house, a servant in the livery of Colonel Mowbray placed a letter in his hand. It contained a few hastily written lines, blotched and half illegible from tears, written by Isabel, in which the unhappy girl entreated him to see her only for a few moments, assuring him that she would explain all—the very thing her husband was determined to avoid.

"Any answer, sir?" anxiously demanded the messenger.

"None!" replied the captain, crushing the letter in his hands; "it is useless for her to write to me any more!"

And it was useless—for the heart of the speaker was as cold and selfish a thing as ever beat within the breast of man—incapable alike of generous impulse or constant affection. The nearest approach he had ever experienced towards the tender passion had been a momentary caprice—and that had withered like a sickly flower at the first chill of poverty.

Unhappily for women, there are too many Captain Herbarts in the world.

The inquest, which was duly held upon the body of the murdered dupe, Major Mottram's, returned the verdict usual in such cases. His assassin and the two seconds were held to bail, assured beforehand that the punishment which awaited them would be one of those mockeries which too often disgrace the name of justice.

It was arranged between General Bouchier and Sir Jasper Pepper, that the marriage between the former and the widow of Captain Elton should for the present be postponed. Shortly after, a series of paragraphs appeared in the papers, denying that an alliance had ever been in contemplation. So society is gull'd.

CHAPTER LVIII.

Truth needs no disguise; its noblest garb
Is its own nakedness.

OLD PLAY.

Soon after the arrival of Henry Ashton and Joe Beans at Carrow, it became generally known from the orders given, that the widowed Lady Mowbray was about to take up her abode once more at the abbey—where Mrs. Jarmy Nicholls, the butler, and such of the old servants as could be collected, removed, to make the necessary preparations for her reception. Previous to the departure of our hero for London, both himself and the worthy rector had taken care to make the story of the cruel deceit which Captain Lucas had practised upon her generally known; so that an unusual degree of sympathy was excited in her favour.

When Martin heard of it, the old man nodded and smiled.

"I saw it all in my dreams!" he muttered; "and it has come true! The rest will follow!"

When asked what he meant by "the rest," he shook his head, and relapsed into silence. Leaning on the arm of Joe, he found his way to his favorite place in the stables, to meditate upon the past, and

speculate, perhaps upon the future—for he was much given to speculation in his way. Most of the servants considered his words at the outbreak of the childish state into which they imagined, from his general treachery, he had fallen; but they were deceived: The old man's memory was fresh as ever—a fact of which he gradually convinced them, by reminding Mrs. Jarmy, who superintended the arranging of Lady Mowbray's chamber and dressing-room herself, where certain articles of furniture had formerly stood, and what flowers her unhappy master had loved the best.

Farmer Ashton was not the first husband who had experienced the impossibility of keeping a secret from his wife. If the good dame was not as clever, she was quite as curious as the youngest and prettiest of her sex. It was not long, therefore, before—partly by wheedling, partly by sulking, putting this and that together, and practising those allowable arts which it is the peculiar privilege of wives to exercise—she extracted from her husband the avowal that the Khan was no other than his long-absent brother.

"Then he be Harry's father?" she observed, as her mind grasped the full importance of the admission.

"Of course he is, wife!" was the rejoinder.

Here her affection took the alarm, and she eagerly demanded if he wanted to seduce her boy—for so she invariably called our hero—into "furrin" parts; adding, with a sigh, that she had trusted he had seen enough of them.

"I should think not!" replied the farmer, after some deliberation; "especially as all be straight *fowards* now between him and Miss Ellen. Besides, Harry doesn't know it yet!"

"Not know that the Khan, as you call him, is his father?" repeated the astonished dame.

"No!"

"Well—well!"

These words with the farmer's wife expressed the *ne plus ultra* of astonishment, when language—a gift she was by no means deficient in—fell short of the vastness of her impressions.

"But thee intends to tell him?" she grasped at last.

The farmer shook his head, and muttered something about having promised his brother to conceal the tie between him and our hero for the present.

"But I have not promised!" exclaimed the dame, with honest indignation—for her woman's heart true to the natural instinct of her sex, revolted at such unnatural conduct. "Is he ashamed of the boy?" she demanded, with increased vehemence. "Oh, Matthew—Matthew! would that he were ours!"

"Would he were!" ejaculated the farmer. "Not that we could love him better!"

It was not without considerable wheedling and tact the worthy man succeeded in persuading his better half to promise to conceal from his brother that he had betrayed his secret. Even then she gave but a half consent.

"And poor Harry, too!" added her husband.

"Heaven knows when we shall see Harry again!" answered his wife, warmly.

The affectionate woman knew her own heart too well to promise that. With this implied understanding, her husband was forced to appear content.

Some persons affect to despise tact. Is it not frequently because they lack the perception to use it? Tact is but the art of making the best possible use of circumstances. It is a sort of moral palliative for the disagreements of life, which, like the wheels of a machine, move all the easier for being greased.

With the exception of a few very slight hints, glances, and now and then a muttered word or two, and a knowing toss of the head—which, had not the mind of the Khan been pre-occupied, he must have noticed—the good dame kept her word, till an event occurred which upset all her resolutions and promises. This was nothing less than the return of Henry from London. He had left the companion of his journey, Joe Beans, at the rectory, to impart the news to the housekeeper and servants.

The two brothers and Mrs. Ashton were seated at supper when our hero unexpectedly entered the room. At the sound of his well-known footstep in the passage, his aunt bounded from her chair. The next instant her arms were round the neck of her favourite.

"Welcome home, my dear boy!" she cried; "welcome home! Somehow it don't seem home without thee! Here be farmer, and ——"

"Dame—dame!" interrupted her husband, in an imploring tone.

"And *thine* father, too, to welcome thee!" she continued, pointing at the same time to the Khan. "And now the murderer's out! It be no use, Matthew!" she added, in answer to the reproachful look of the old man, and the mortified surprise of the Khan; "I can't h-lp it; it wor in my heart, and found the way to my tongue despite of me!"

Scarcely had she uttered the words, than the painful emotion upon the countenance of her nephew made her bitterly regret her precipitancy.

"That man my father?" he said.

"Yes, Philip Ashton, from *Ingia*—farmer's brother!"

"And he denied me!" exclaimed the young man, bitterly; "denied me, when my heart sprang with confidence and affection towards him! God!" he added, "what have I done? What is the stain upon my heart and name, that my own father should refuse to acknowledge me?"

Without one word of greeting, or extending of the hand, the young man sank upon a seat. His pride, self-respect, and feelings, were too deeply wounded.

"Harry—Harry!" exclaimed the dame, "he will own thee now—be proud of thee—love thee as farmer and I do!"

This last assertion she conscientiously believed to be impossible. Yet she made it in the hope of soothing the agitation of her favorite.

For a few moments the Khan appeared equally surprised and embarrassed. Gradually, however, he recovered his self-possession. He was one of those calm, reflective beings, with whom to will was to perform. He saw that the difficulty he had foreseen, and sought to avoid, had arrived: it found him prepared to meet it.

"Matthew," he said, turning to his brother, "you had better leave me alone with your nephew."

"Nephew!" exclaimed the good dame, indignantly; "why not say your son? It is a much kinder word."

"And take your wife with you."

"I shan't go!" continued his sister-in-law, firmly.

Henry rose from his seat, his countenance still pale, but resolute. "Leave us, dear aunt!" he said; "it is better, perhaps, for both of our sakes, that my father and I should converse without witnesses."

Had he asked her for her heart's pulse, she could not have refused it. Taking the arm of her husband, she slowly and reluctantly left the room.

For some moments the Khan and Henry Ashton remained gazing on each other in silence. The former was the first to break it.

"How often," he observed, "are the best-considered resolutions broken in an instant, and how unjust is man in estimating the actions of his fellow-creatures! I would have spared you much pain and annoyance. To do this, I have repressed the strong impulse of my heart—its natural desires and affections—till the moment had arrived in which I could explain everything. The imprudent confidence of my brother, and the loquacity of his wife, have forestalled both time and the event."

"I do not understand you, sir!" said Henry Ashton, proudly; "when first we met—after I had been fortunate enough to save you from the murderous attack of that wretched ruffian the warrener—you distinctly told me that you were not my father?"

"I did!"

"And now——"

He could not proceed. He could not tell the author of his being how indignant he felt that the first meeting between them should have been branded by a lie—a heartless, unnecessary lie! In his reveries he had fondly imagined his father as a man whom he could both love and honor—a hardy soldier, who had fought his way to fortune, courted death at the cannon's mouth—frank, open-hearted, and sincere.

"Spare me!" he said. "I would not insult you!"

"Or doubt me?"

The youth remained silent.

"Is it for you," said the speaker, drawing his tall

form to its full height, "to reverse the order of nature—for the child to question and judge the parent? Whatever the motive for the concealment

—*the deceit, falsehood, if you will—that I have practised, you at least are bound to respect it!*”

“To respect fal etho! Never, sir!”

“Not falsehood—but your father!” replied the Khan; “do you know all that word implies—the claim it gives to your obedience—the anxious thoughts—the struggle with the world—the desire to enhance a name, that a son may bear it—the yearning of the heart for the future which must dawn at last? Look upon me!” he added, in a tone of still deeper feeling; “toil and suffering have traced many a furrow upon my brow, but you will not find dishonor there! The hour will come—and I speak it fearlessly—when, had you the choice of the noblest in England for a father, you would select the one, ungrateful boy, which nature has given you!”

Henry Ashton was astonished. Instead of seeing his parent humbled and abashed at having been detected in a falsehood, as he imagined he would be, he suddenly assumed the character of an accuser. For the first time in his life he was subdued.

“You judge me harshly, sir!” he said; “place yourself in my position. It had been the hope—the dream of my life, one day of embracing my father, the only parent left me!”

“Well, sir?”

“To find myself denied—disowned!”

“There were reasons, Henry!”

“To the world, but not to me—not to your own heart!” exclaimed the young man, deeply moved, “if it had ever loved! The cold, heartless letter—the only one I ever received from you—commanding my departure for India, at the very moment, too, you had returned to England!”

“It was necessary for your safety,” replied the Khan, slightly moved; “had I known the temper of my mind, its qualities, and strength, I should have written differently.”

“And whose was the fault you did not?”

“Mine!” answered the renegade, frankly; “and yet you have been the object of many a painful thought—of many a prayer! Often on the battlefield, or in the wild jungle, when death and pestilence have scattered their victims round me, I have wished my life preserved for no other motive than for you! But enough of this!” he added; “it is time to end an interview painful to us both. I must reflect how best to explain that which at present appears inexplicable. Good night! In the morning we shall be more composed. One sting, at least, I can remove from your heart, in the assurance that, even to himself, Henry Ashton will never have cause to blush at the motives and conduct of his father!”

Convinced even against his reason, that the promise thus solemnly made would one day be fulfilled, our hero would have embraced him, but the Khan gently repelled his advance; and contented himself by shaking him warmly by the hand.

“Not yet!” he said, with a smile; “wait till all is clear!”

With these words he quitted the room, leaving the young man a prey to emotions, too complicated to be analyzed—to thoughts too evanescent to be retained.

When the inmates of the Home Farm assembled at breakfast on the following morning, the Khan had disappeared. Henry sought him everywhere in the neighborhood—but in vain. It was long ere he returned to Carrow.

CHAPTER LIX.

Sing not of home—the words recall
Hopes buried in a lonely grave;
Bring back to wounded memory all
Time hath bereft, or love ere gave.

ITALY, BY THE AUTHOR.

The day fixed for the return of the long-exiled wife of Sir William Mewbray to the home of her short-lived wedded happiness at last arrived. The setting sun was shining brightly upon the ivy mantled walls of the old abbey, as the carriages rolled along the newly-gravelled road in the park, through crowds of respectful tenantry and villagers. There were neither shouts nor waving of handkerchiefs. The long-slandered lady was welcomed to the halls of her murdered husband with a silent sympathy which expressed more than words—which are too frequently lip-homage—not the language of the heart.

When the carriage drew up to the porch, where Mrs. Jarmy, old Martin, and the rest of the servants were waiting to receive her, the emotion which Lady Mowbray had hitherto successfully repressed, burst forth when she recognized the well-remembered features of Jarmy and old Martin, scarcely changed since the day she first arrived at Carrow, a happy, blooming bride; the memories of the past crowded upon her brain, resolution gave way, nature asserted its supremacy, and she wept bitterly.

Henry Ashton received her half fainting in his arms, and supported rather than led her to the drawing-room, where he resigned her to the care of Ellen and the Duchess of Devonshire, who, throughout her recent sufferings and trials, had proved herself a sympathizing friend.

“Thank heaven,” said Dr. Orme, as he shook our hero warmly by the hand, “she has arrived, and borne the shock of revisiting the home of her early love and sorrow better than I expected!”

“Did you observe,” asked Henry, “how she shuddered as I bore her past the library door?”

“I did,” said the rector, with a sigh at the recollection of the sad fate of his murdered friend. “Her Grace has imparted everything to her!”

“Everything?”

“Yes; we judged it best. An incautious word—the imprudence of servants—their involuntary terror on passing the fatal apartment—might suddenly have revealed it to her! In my observations of life, Harry,” he continued, “I have observed that great shocks seldom kill—it is the petty, repeated ones which wear out the heart and mind!”

His former pupil turned aside to hide the emotion he felt at his observation.

“What is the matter with you?” continued the old man, kindly; “at your age—the world opening brightly before you—your heart should be all sunshine, cheerful as your fortunes!”

Taking the arm of the speaker, our hero led him towards the lawn, and related the discovery of his long-absent father, in the person of the Khan—the conversation between them—the tone he had assumed, and his sudden disappearance from the farm; adding how deeply his singular conduct had pained him.

Respect, if not affection, kept him silent on the subject of the solemn denial he had previously made of any such tie existing between them: even to the rector he could not reconcile his mind to utter a word dishonoring to his parent.

“Strange!” said Dr. Orme, musingly; “there can be no reason for such concealment, unless—”

He paused, fearful of unnecessarily wounding his feelings.

“Unless,” repeated Henry, finishing the sentence for him, “he had acted like a worthless seducer to my mother: that is the fear which haunts me—sits like a nightmare on my soul—broods over my sleepless pillow! As for the adventurous adventure of birth, I value it as little as any man; but can I—ought I to ask Ellen to share the fate of one, who perhaps has not even a name to give her?”

Seldom had his friend seen our hero yield so completely to vague forebodings. It was evident that his imagination had dwelt so long and intently on the suspicion of his illegitimacy, that he considered it a reality.

“But you have a heart, my dear boy!” replied Dr. Orme, soothingly; “and that is all Ellen cares for!”

“If I have a heart!” exclaimed the young man, sorrowfully, “what must it endure to see the generous, high-born girl who has blessed me with her love, humbled in the world—degraded, perhaps, in the eyes of society, on my account? It would break—break!”

“You consider this matter too seriously,” said the rector, musingly. “From the little I have seen, and your description of your father, he does not appear to have been the heartless being you suppose. Have you never questioned the farmer and his wife upon the subject?”

“Frequently.”

“What say they?”

“They know as little of the name and station of my mother as myself!” answered the youth with bitterness; “my life,” he added, “is a mysterious problem—its solution, degradation and misery!”

“Nothing of the kind!” exclaimed the rector, more and more alarmed at the distress of the speaker; “your father may have married above his rank—far more likely than below it. Rely upon it. Has-

ry, had you been merely the child of chance, he never would have consigned you to the care of his brother—insulted his honest roof by introducing such an inmate as his nephew. I am disposed to think that he has other and better reasons for his apparently unnatural conduct. Leave it to time," he continued, "which has solved more mysteries than yours; in the meanwhile hope!"

Without permitting him to resume the subject, the speaker led his adopted son towards the house, where he passed one of those sunny hours which, like the oasis, mark life's desert, in the society of Ellen.

There is a magic in the eyes of woman, especially when they beam upon us with affection. As the warm rays of the sun exhale the noxious vapours from the earth, so will the smile of woman disperse the mist of care, cleansing the oppressed heart of that perilous stuff whereof

Cares and unquiet dreams, which haunt
The restless pillow and the waking hour,

in youth and age are alike composed.

From that hour Henry Ashton forgot his sorrow, and was happy. Those who, like the hero of our tale, have loved, alone can tell how happy.

The return of Lady Mowbray to Carrow Abbey was followed by the silent dispersion of the tenantry; there were no bonfires, no rejoicings: all felt that such demonstrations would afford pain rather than gratification to the unhappy widow, whose wounded heart shrank even at the approach of pity.

Amongst the rest, Joe Beans, after taking a farewell of Susan, who remained to attend upon her young mistress, was making his way through the park, meditating most probably on matrimony, and the farm which the rector and Henry had both promised him, when the skirts of his best coat, which he had donned for the occasion, were pulled with a violent jerk: the young man turned somewhat sharply, and recognized his little *protégé*, Red Ralph, who, since the execution of the warrener, had fallen somewhat into disfavour—Joe not approving of the unfeeling joy he had displayed on the occasion.

"Well, Ralph," he said, "what brings thee here?"

"Partly to see thee, Mister Beans," replied the lad, "and partly to see the fun—Master Harry, parson, and ladies. There be no harm in that, I 'pose—there wor' no hanging; but thee beest angry wi' I; but I knew no better."

"No better, Ralph?" said Joe, seriously.

"No; I wor' never taught better! How should I 'a' known it wor' wrong to see old man hanged? Arter all, it wor'nt so pleasant!"

There was a truth in the poor lad's defence which his patron felt; although, to make an impression on the mind of the speaker, he did not for the moment choose to acknowledge it. He had never been taught better. How many an unfortunate, arraigned at the bar of justice for some outrage to the laws of honesty, might retort the same words upon that society which accused and punished him.

Why spend so much upon prisons, when schools are not only cheaper, but far more effectual for the prevention of crime? The schoolmaster is a better instructor than the gaoler.

"You must go to school, Ralph!" said theyoung man, in a kinder tone.

"Ees! I should like that!"

"I'll get Master Harry to speak to the farmer, to spare you of an evening. I am no great scholar myself; but, thank God, I can both read and write!"

"Can 'ee, though?" exclaimed the boy, with a stare of admiration.

"Ay, and cipher, too!" added Joe. "And you, if you choose to be industrious, may soon do the same!"

Ralph cut one of those extraordinary capets—something between the *pirouette* of a French dancer and the gyration of a dervise—his usual mode of expressing satisfaction.

"Thee beest mortal kind to I!" he said. "And if there be anything I can doneonly tell I! Hang it, I'd shoot any one that did thee harm, Mister Beans, and think nought on it!"

"Be attentive and honest," replied Joe, with a smile at the exuberant gratitude of the lad; "and any little good I can do for you, Ralph, will be repaid! You must leave me now," he added, "for I have a great deal upon my mind, and —"

"I know—I know!" interrupted the boy, with a grin.

"You know?"

"Ees! Thee beest thinking o' Susan. I heard farmer tell dame thee wor to marry her, and Master Harry gi' thea a farm! I wish somebody would gi' La farm," he added; "wor it no bigger than Remenant's field at Mortlake?"

"All in good time, Ralph!" said Joe, laughingly. "Stranger things than that may happen! Good night!"

And so they separated: Joe Beans towards the rectory, and the red haired urchin through the wood, a short cut to the farm, where he had been employed, ever since his arrival at Carrow, by Farmer Ashton.

Red Ralph continued his route, whistling and occasionally muttering to himself, more like some elf-begotten sprite than a Christian lad, till he approached the deep, secluded dell in which the hut or cottage formerly inhabited by his old enemy, Will Sideier, was situated. Ever since the execution of the murderer, it had been regarded with a superstitious terror by the country-people and farm-laborers; the old women of the village even went so far as to say that it was haunted.

Now, though Ralph, as we have seen, during his residence at Mortlake, was anything but superstitious, still somehow or other, since the death of the warrener, he did not feel quite so courageous as formerly. As he approached the spot, his whistle gradually subsided into a sort of humming sound, produced by impelling the breath between the teeth; and more than once he started at the rustling of the fox or wild cat stealing like a thief through the furze and brushwood.

"Dang it!" he said, pausing and looking round him; "it be almost dark! I have a good mind to go back!"

He advanced slowly for a few paces.

"They'd laugh at I at farm. No, I mun go on!"

The boy, who had spent much of his time in the woods and fields, and had been concerned, on more than one occasion, in poaching excursions in the hallowed precincts of Richmond Park, possessed an eye and ear almost as acute as a young Indian's. Under the influence, if not of positive terror, at least of alarm, he began to exercise them, avoiding, involuntarily as it were, each clump of trees or brushwood in his path, behind which any evil-disposed marauder might conceal himself: by this time his whistling had entirely ceased.

In this frame of mind he reached, at last, the little open sward in front of the hut. To his astonishment, he noticed a stream of red light passing through the windows. At first he thought it was the reflection of the sunset in the glass; but the window was due east, and Ralph was sufficiently an observer of nature to know that the sun never set in that direction—"at least," as he afterwards used to say, when relating his adventure, "I know'd that it never did at Mortlake!"

All the strange reports which he had previously heard and laughed at, touching the hut being haunted by the spirit of Will Sideier, came crowding on his mind. After the stare of astonishment which the conviction that the light came from the inside of the cottage, instead of being refracted from the casement, had subsided, his first impulse was to fall flat on his face, and creep, like a wild animal, under the brushwood. He did not feel himself in security till safely sheltered there.

What the stable was to old Martin, a hole in the hedge, or a nook in some furze-bush, appeared to Red Ralph—the best place in the world for counsel or meditation. Even when a boy, he could always collect his thoughts, or devour the fruit he had pilfered, with greater satisfaction there. On such occasions, he did not like to be intruded upon.

"What can it be?" he mentally asked himself.—"I heard steward tell farmer, only this mornin', that hut wor a comin' down! Nobody would live in it. Somebody though," he added, "does live in it! Mayhap, only poachers; mayhap, summat worse!"

Ralph had great faith in a stick. His first care, therefore, was to choose a stout young sapling, which he cut and trimmed till he had obtained an excellent cudgel—which, there is little doubt, he would have the firmness to use, if assaulted—for there was an instinctive combativeness in his nature, very like that which is observed in young ter-

riers in their stage of puppyhood. Most puppies merely bark—they do not bite!

"If it beant a ghost," muttered the boy, passing the stick critically between his finger and thumb, "I don't so much care! I beant afraid of real flesh and blood like myself; but I shouldn't wish to see t' old man wi' a cotton nightcap over his face, his legs a skriggling and a skriggling—ugh!"

A shudder and an involuntary expression of disgust at the recollection of the scene he had witnessed, came over him.

Armed with his cudgel and resolution, Ralph ventured to creep from his hiding-place to an oak-tree, whose gnarled branches overshadowed the road, and nearly reached the roof of the warrener's hut. Cautionily climbing the trunk, he placed himself astride one of the branches, and gradually advanced till he found himself in a position to perceive whatever was taking place in the interior of the cottage, from whose window the light continued to stream with a still redder glare.

A cheerful fire was burning upon the hearth, and an iron kettle or pot swinging over it. Upon the table in the centre of the room was a plate, together with a loaf of bread and a bottle. But what most excited the boy's attention was a small black box, with bright silver clasps to it. He felt assured that he had seen it before, although he could not remember where.

"They beant no ghosts," thought Ralph; "but poachers! What a fool I wor!"

Satisfied that the conclusion he had come to was the correct one, he would have descended from the tree and pursued his way towards the farm, had not a vague curiosity restrained him. He fancied that he should like to see the person for whom such preparation was being made.

"Some brave chap, no doubt," he muttered; "and fond o' a bit o' sport! So be I: mayhap we shall agree together."

Still the black box with the silver clasps excited his attention: he could not remove his eyes from it. It appeared to possess a species of fascination for him. He felt both curious and provoked: curious as to its contents, and annoyed at himself for not recollecting where he had seen it before.

To all appearance the hut was tenantless, and the occasion was very tempting. Ralph gradually went backwards along the arm of the oak, till he reached the trunk, down which he carefully slid, carrying his stick between his teeth during the operation.

"I will see, I be determined!" he said; "if they catch, they can't hang I! I arn't a thief!"

The curious urchin approached the door with the firm resolution of entering the cottage by the window, in the event of finding it locked. With a caution which the most experienced housebreaker might have envied, he placed his hand upon the latch, and pushed once or twice gently; finding that it resisted his efforts, at last firmly.

He was puzzled—there was no lock, that he could see, to the door, and yet he could not open it: the natural inference was, that it was barred on the inside: if so, some one must be there. The discovery made him cautious.

"It be a rum go!" he mentally observed. "I can't see any one, and there be only one room in t' place!"

His next attempt was at the window, where a terrible surprise awaited him—a surprise which, from being a half sceptic in ghost stories, transformed him at once into a true believer. Standing with his back to the fire was the warrener; he could not be deceived—it wns his dress, his tall, gaunt figure, hat and gibern.

The red hair of the urchin began to rise and fall as if life were in it; fortunately his terror was too great for words of exclamation. He dropped from the window-sill, and fell senseless upon the sward.

CHAPTER LX.

Can such things be,

And overcome us like a summer cloud,
Without our special power! SHAKSPEARE.

Joe Beans was snugly sleeping in his comfortable truckle bed at the rectory, where he still continued to take up his abode. Perhaps his dreams were of Susan. Indeed, we think we may venture to assert as a fact that they were so—for only a few hours before retiring to rest, by dint of great coaxing, wheedling, and promising, he had obtained

from the pretty rustic a promise that, if her dear young lady should marry Henry Ashton—that if the bride and bridegroom particularly wished it—and, above all, if Joe would promise to make her an excellent husband, the same day which united the lovers should see her Mrs. Susan Beans.

We appeal to our fair readers. What could the sleeper be dreaming of, except his sweetheart, after such promise as that?

Several smart raps had been made at the window of Joe's bed-room. Still he slept. None so hard to waken as the happy dreamer. A stone, thrown with more force than the preceding ones, cracked one of the panes at last, and the fragments of broken glass came rattling down upon the floor. The honest rustic started from his sleep, and, staring round, demanded who was there?

The reply was made in the form of another pebble falling upon the bed.

Joe sprang upon his feet, and rushed to the window.

"Who's there?" he repeated.

"It be I, Mister Beans!" answered the well-known voice of Red Ralph.

Crouching under a tree upon the lawn, was the uncouth figure of the cow-boy, who, after the terrible apparition in the hut of the warrener, could not rest till he had imparted what he had seen to his rustic patron.

"And what do you want at this hour of the night?" said Joe, in anything but an amiable tone of voice—for he naturally felt annoyed at being disturbed. "I am afraid, Ralph, you have been drinking!"

"Twor water, then!" replied the boy.

"Go home directly, sir!"

"Go home!" repeated Ralph. "Noa—noa, Misster Beans! I dare not pass the common, arter what I ha' seen to-night! Do 'ee come down," he added in a tone of entreaty. "Indeed I beant a larkin'! If I tell thee a lie, thee canst take it out on me wi' a good thrashing!"

As there was some sense as well as earnestness in the last proposition of the speaker—and Joe knew him to be shrewd beyond his years—he at once resolved to comply with his request. He had frequently asked himself the question whether, despite the deaths of Meenan Hafaz and Will Sideler, the troubles of Master Harry and Miss Ellen were all over yet.

"Wait!" he said, "and make no more noise, lest you alarm the rector and the servants!"

"I won't! Misster Beans! But do 'ee make haste!"

In a few minutes Henry's friend made his appearance upon the lawn. His first intention had been to scold the boy for what he believed some foolish alarm: but no sooner did he perceive his pale face—which, in the moonlight, appeared both ghastly and distorted by nervous twitching about the mouth—than he changed his purpose; and, placing his hand kindly upon his shoulder, inquired what was the matter.

"I ha' seen him! I ha' seen him!" exclaimed Ralph, wildly.

"Seen him! Seen who?" demanded the bewildered Joe.

"The war-ren-er!"

The teeth of the lad chattered with terror at the recollection, as he endeavored to pronounce the name of the murderer.

"Fancy, Ralph—fancy!" replied the young man.

"The dead never return to visit us!"

"Don't they, though?" exclaimed his protege. "I thought so once, but I know better now! I tell 'ee, Misster Beans, I ha' seen un, just as he wos dressed in Cromwell House, wi' his game bay on t' shoulder, and broad hat drawn over his bushy gray eyebrows! I'd swear to un!"

"But where was this?"

"In the hut in wood, where he used to live! I dare say he has done many a murder there, and that be why he can't rest!"

"Imagination—all imagination, Ralph!" said Joe Beans, assuming a conviction which he was very far from feeling. "Even supposing now," he continued, "that the ghost of Will was condemned to revisit his old haunt as a punishment for his crime, I don't see why the ghost of his old clothes shouldn't rest in peace! It was quite disgraceful for them to be hanged with him!"

There was a deeper vein of philosophy in this objection than the honest rustic dreamed of.

"But he *worn't* hanged in 'em!" said the cow-boy. "He war dressed in clothes he wore at Cromwell House, when he towzed Mrs. Susan, and tried to kill I! I could swear to a agin by patch on shoulder, and big, swagging pockets!"

"Still more unlikely!" objected Joe, that a ghost should have gone all the way from Norwich to Mortlake to dress itself in the ghost of the old clothes it had left behind! It won't do, Ralph! You must have been drinking or dreaming!"

This was said quite as much, perhaps, to test the conviction of the lad in the truth of his strange story, as to express the speaker's own doubts upon the subject which were considerably shaken. There is an innate credulity and love of the marvellous in most minds, and Joe was not exempt from the common weakness.

"Did you see his face?" he demanded, after a few moments' reflection.

"Noa—noa! the soight of his old coat and hat war enough for I!" answered Ralph, with a shudder. "I am sure it war he! He had gotten a box on table, square black and silver, loike! I ha' seen it somewhere afore, tho' I can't tell where! Can 'ee, Mister Beans?"

At the mention of the box, a new light broke upon the mind of honest Joe. He had seen such a box. He knew that the much-wronged widow of Sir William Mowbray had just such another, which she placed nightly under her pillow; and that it contained the letter of the colonel to the Abbate Lucas, as well as other papers necessary for the vindication of her honor.

"Thee art a sharp lad, Ralph," he exclaimed, "after all; and possess far more wit than I do!"

"Do I, though?" answered the boy, with a grin of satisfaction—for hitherto he had looked up to the speaker with great respect, on account of his superior shrewdness. "Well, I shouldn't ha' thought it!"

"This is no ghost, I feel convinced," continued the young man, thoughtfully.

"Beant it?"

"But some designing villain, who has assumed the appearance of Will Sideler, in order to terrify those whom he might encounter in the execution of his project. He will not terrify me," added the speaker, with an air of determination. "Wait for me a few moments, Ralph, whilst I get my pistols: we will soon unkennel the dark schemer!"

"But is 'ee quite sure, Mister Beans?" exclaimed the still terrified lad, but half convinced. "It war awful loike un!"

"Convinced! I'd swear to it! It must be Colonel Mowbray, or one of his agents! His aim is to obtain the box, which contains the proofs of his villainies! I see all!"

"And so do I!" said Ralph, joyously; for I recollect now where I seed it, or one just loike it! Lady in black, with pale face, that Master Harry carried out of the carriage into the hall yonder, had it to her hand! What a fool I war! But sin' it be no ghost," he added, with an air of satisfaction, "I'm for 'un! I don't mind real live flesh and blood loike ourselves, Mister Beans; I'll have 'em up un!"

Joe returned to the rectory, and in a few minutes reappeared, well armed. The cow-boy readily consented to accompany him through the wood, to the hut of the warrener; but to all his entreaties for a pistol, Joe Beans turned a deaf ear. He knew the urchin to be not only as cunning but as agile as a fox, or wild cat; and he determined, in the event of danger, to let him trust to his wit and agility: a pistol, he justly considered, would be a dangerous weapon in such hands.

Cautiously gliding through the wood, more like shadows than living things—for not a word was spoken on either side—the two adventurers at last arrived at the secluded dell in which the lonely hut of the warrener was situated. Although the moon was shining brightly, the broad shadows of the stately oaks and furs which it cast athwart their path, had hitherto screened them; but on the open sward before the cottage they were compelled to use the utmost caution, lest their approach should be perceived by any one lurking within.

Just as Red Ralph—who had been marching first—was about to advance from the friendly shadow of the wood into the full light of the moon, his more cautious companion gave a peculiar kind of signal, imitating the cry of an owl: the boy stopped, like a well-trained spaniel, in an instant; the same de-

vice having been agreed upon between them when they wanted to discover each other's whereabouts, at the time of their adventures in Mortlake.

"What does 'ee want, Mister Beans?" whispered the boy, as soon as he crept stealthily to his side.

"Not so fast, Ralph; there may be danger!"

"Door be open," replied the urchin; "and light out!"

"Stay here!" said Joe, firmly; "I will venture first!"

"Noa, Mister Beans—noa—if I do I'm danged!" answered the lad, firmly; "thee has been kind to I—given I good advice—got I a place wi' Farmer Ashton, and not left I to starve when I had served thee turn at Cromel House, as some folk would ha'n't done! It be no use—I will go with 'ee! I bean't a bit afraid: thoif I be little, I be tough—so say no more about it!"

"Well then," replied his companion, patting his rough elf-llocks—for he felt touched as well as pleased at Ralph's fidelity; "thee shall, lad—thee shall—but remember, not a word, unless I speak!"

"All right, Mr. Beans!"

"And if anything occurs to me," added the young man, in a voice which betrayed some slight emotion, "run as fast as you can to the rectory, alarm the servants, call up Master Harry, and tell him what you have seen!"

Red Ralph began to blubber at the idea of any danger occurring to his friend and patron.

"I will, Mister Beans—I will! but do gi' I a pistol! Indeed I know how to use it! I popped at sparrows and blackbirds a hundred times at Mortlake, and never missed un—it be too bad to doubt I!"

"So it is," whispered Joe, his reluctance to intrust him with the weapon quite overcome by the feeling which the urchin displayed; "there it is—but be careful!"

"Eea, Mister Beans!" answered the boy, with a grin of satisfaction at the confidence reposed in him.

"And remember, you are only to use it at the last extremity!"

"At what? Mr. Beans."

"At the last extremity," repeated his patron; "that is, to defend your life!"

"Or yours!" muttered Ralph. "I understand—I bean't such a fool as folk do say I look!"

The door of the hut, judging from the outside fastening, had been broken open; inside it was easily secured by means of a strong oaken bar, left standing against the walls. After groping about for some time in perfect darkness—for the rude wooden flap which served as a shutter had been let down—without meeting the least interruption, or hearing any sound beyond their own footsteps, Joe Beans ventured at last to strike a light.

A candle, half burnt down, placed in an empty bottle, was upon the table: he lit it, and the place became distinctly visible—they were alone.

"There be no one here, Ralph!" observed the young man.

"No, Mister Beans—the bird be flown!"

"Was there a bird?" said his companion; his former doubt, that the boy's imagination had deceived him, returning as he viewed the desolate, deserted place.

"Thee canst easily tell!" answered the mortified lad.

"How so?"

"As do I used to do," continued the urchin, "at Mortlake, when I wanted to know if the birds were hatching—feel if the nest be warm!"

Joe took the hint, and began to rake the ashes, gathered in a lump upon the hearthstone: as he displaced them, several bright sparks flew upwards, and particles of half-burnt wood began to glow and reddish, exposed to the reviving influence of the atmosphere.

"By heavens, you are right!" exclaimed the young man; "the nest is warm!"

"I told 'ee so!"

From this moment no further doubt remained upon his mind of the poor boy's truth. A further examination of the hut proved, had further proof been wanting, that it had lately been inhabited. Not only were remains of provisions found on the shelf, but straw and grass had been gathered into a heap in a recess close by the chimney, to serve as a bed.

This was not all. Under the straw they discovered a carpet-beg, carefully concealed: it contained

linen and a suit of travelling clothes, evidently belonging to some one holding the position of a gentleman.

"What does 'ee think now, Mister Beans?" demanded his informant, with a triumphant grin.

"That you are right, Ralph. I was a fool to doubt you."

"Noa—noa—not a fool—only hard of belief, like!" answered the urchin. "Won't 'ee feel in pockets?"

Joe took the hint, and began carefully to examine them. They were all empty, save one: in that he discovered a card, with several memoranda written in cipher.

"Hold the candle!" he exclaimed; "I can make nothing of this!"

Ralph brought the candle, and although he could make nothing of the memoranda, the name upon the card was plain enough—it was that of Colonel Mowbray.

The presence of the scheming uncle of Miss De Vere in such a place and under the disguise of the warrener, coupled with the circumstance of the box, were quite sufficient to convince the friend of Henry Ashton that something was being plotted against his happiness, or that of the unfortunate Lady Mowbray, and he determined to proceed at once to the abbey, and communicate all he had seen and heard to our hero. A chill of horror ran through his manly frame, as the fearful thought suggested itself, that perhaps he was too late.

"Ralph!" he exclaimed, in a tone of decision, "we are losing time here! The villain has the start of us, and even now may be succeeding in his infamous attempt! We must start."

"Where to?" demanded the boy.

"To the abbey. There the solutions of this night's work will take place."

"I be with 'ee, Mister Beans," said the urchin, "an I know it be no ghost, I bean't a bit afraid on un! I should like to shoot a man," he added; "a real thief or a murderer! I never killed anything bigger nor a cat, yet! How the folk will talk about I at Mortlake!"

"If he attempts to harm Master Harry or Miss Ellen," said his companion, with an air of desperation, as they left the hut together, "shoot him, Ralph—shoot him like a dog!"

"I will, Mister Beans—that I will!" answered the urchin, with a grin of intense satisfaction at the permission. I should like to know," he added, "how a chap feels arter killing a man!"

Byron, if we remember rightly, once made the same observation.

It was now Joe's turn to take the lead. He was too well acquainted with every road leading to Carrow to require a guide. So rapidly did the honest fellow pursue his way, that Red Ralph was compelled to run and bound along the footpath like a kangaroo, to keep up with him. In less than an hour they reached the wall of the park.

"Shall I ring at lodge?" demanded the boy, half out of breath with his exertions.

"Do as I do!" said his kind friend, at the same time catching a branch of one of the trees which overhung the wall, and swinging himself to its level.

"Canst follow?" he said, looking down to his companion.

"Like a cat, Mister Beans! See here!"

In an instant the speaker was beside him.

Once in the limits of the park, they ran rather than walked towards the house. A dead silence reigned around the venerable pile—not a light was to be seen from any of the windows—all seemed buried in repose.

"See—see l'" whispered the urchin, suddenly grasping the arm of Joe Beans, and pointing at the same time towards the shrubbery, which extended from the stream into which he had pushed Parson Twinetext, close to the north wing; "we bean't alone!"

Joe looked in the direction pointed to, and distinctly saw the dark shadow of a man retreating amid the trees and bushes, in the midst of which was an old Gothic summer-house, which, ever since he had known the place, had been carefully locked. It had once been the favorite resort of Sir William and his lady. After her supposed infidelity the baronet never entered it.

"Thank God!" he muttered, "we are in time!"

After beating about the shrubbery for some time, they found the pavilion, or summer-house. The

key was in the door. Joe pushed it open, and, with his pistols ready for use, sprang into the room, closely followed by Ralph; it was empty.

A dim light appeared to issue from the earth. Creeping towards it, they discovered that a flag-stone had been removed, and could feel a flight of stairs descending beneath the foundations of the building. The light was evidently carried by some one who had preceded them, for its rays became fainter and fainter as they gazed.

Without an instant's hesitation or a word being spoken, both began to descend. Joe had nearly reached the bottom step, when he heard the click of his companion's pistol. The urchin was preparing for action, as he termed it.

"Be careful!" he whispered.

"I will, Mister Beans!" replied the boy, in the same low tone; "but this be a mortal queer place—summut like Cromwell House!"

CHAPTER LXI.

Old gossips love on winter nights to sit Close to the cheerful hearth, telling strange tales Of moor or hall haunted by spectre grim— Of murder wondrously brought to light, Of wrong made right at last.

HEIR OF THE SEPT.

ALTHOUGH the return of the ancient servants of the Mowbray family to Carrow Abbey was a source of considerable satisfaction to them, a feeling of terror was not unmixed with it. If they naturally felt pleased at the thought of returning to end their days in the home where most of them had passed the best years of their lives, it was alloyed by the recollection of the fearful scenes they had witnessed in it.

None cared to admit it, but each felt a dread of passing alone through the old-fashioned, dreary chambers and dark, panelled corridors. They started at the echo of their own footfall, and hastened their steps till they reached the housekeeper's room, where a cheerful fire and the society of their fellow-servants gradually recalled the colour to their cheeks.

The picture-gallery, the apartment in which Ellea had been terrified by the warrener, and the library, the scene of Sir William's murder, were carefully avoided. No one, save old Martin, would venture in them—and he wandered about in meditation and sadness. Not even Mrs. Jarmy, who had known him so many years, or Nicholls, the butler, could understand him: frequently they heard the old man repeating to himself:

"Not yet! no rest yet? the aloe has not bloomed!"

"What does he mean by the aloe not blooming?" inquired the worthy housekeeper of the servants.

None could explain the mystery to her, and it was little use asking Martin; he had never been of a very communicative disposition, and late events had made him more taciturn than ever.

All the inmates of the abbey, except the domestics, had retired to rest; they, although the abbey clock had long struck the hour of midnight, still remained, like a herd of frightened deer, gathered round the fire in Mrs. Jarmy's room—who so far waived her dignity on the occasion, as to admit even the kitchen-maids to her apartment, to the great disgust of the servants of the Duchess of Devonshire, who, between themselves, pronounced the arrangement to be low, radical and subversive of all order of the flunkey hierarchy.

Still they did not choose to withdraw themselves—for the gloomy old mansion had infected them with its terrors, too.

"How can you live in such a *horrid* place!" exclaimed her grace's own footman, to whom, as a point of hospitality, Nicholls had resigned his own place opposite the housekeeper. "It ain't fit for *any* one has as nerves!"

"Use, Mr. Flip—use!" replied the old lady, to hide her displeasure at hearing the ancient house of the Mowbray family called a "horrid place."

The butler bit his lips, and remained silent; not so Martin, who occupied an easy chair in the chimney-nook.

"What does he say?" inquired the old man.

"He calls Carrow a *horrid* place," answered the kitchen-maid, who had noticed the disdainful glances which from time to time the aristocratic servants of the duchess cast towards her.

" You should see Chatsworth!" continued the flunkey, without condescending to notice the interruption.

" Ay, that you should!" chimed in the lady's maid.

" And what is Chatsworth, compared to Carrow?" exclaimed the aged groom, his eyes flashing with anger. " The mushroom to the oak; Carrow had stood five hundred years before the founder of Chatsworth had laid a single stone of its foundation!"

" At any rate we have no ghosts there!" observed the maid of the duchess, tartly.

" Of course you have not!" replied Mrs. Jarvy, who began to feel her temper getting a little ruffled; " it is only in very ancient houses, like Carrow, and in the families of our *oldest* nobility, that such things are ever heard of! Thank heaven!" she added, with a very equivocal expression of satisfaction, " we have plenty here!"

" I don't believe a word of it!" exclaimed Mr. Flip.

" Nor I!" added the lady's maid.

The housekeeper twitted the bunch of keys at her girle rather nervously—a usual habit with her when thoroughly vexed.

" Perhaps ma'am," she said—it is a bad sign when ladies begin to " ma'am" each other—" you would like to be convinced?"

" Convinced!"

" You or the gentleman—it is immaterial which of you; you have only to pass the night, or rather morning, in the green-chamber, where Lady Blanche Mowbray was found dead on her wedding night to be thoroughly satisfied! Shall I order it to be prepared for you?"

It is needless to say that the offer was instantly declined.

" Or Mr. Flip, if he prefers it, may sit in the great hall," quietly observed the butler, " and see the marble statue of Sir Richard bow its head as the clock strikes twelve; pity it is too late to-night!"

" Or meet the ghost of the nun in the cloister!"

" Or that of the crusader in the chapel!"

These last suggestions were made by the two old house-maids, who most devoutly believed the truth of every word they were uttering. The two sceptics, who were sceptics only out of opposition, began to look very blank at the variety of offers enumerated; and the chivalrous Mr. Flip seriously meditated soliciting permission of the butler to pass the rest of the night in his apartment, instead of his own, which was situated unpleasantly near to the green chamber.

" Do you mean to say, my dear Mrs. Jarvy," said the abigail, drawing her chair still closer to that of the housekeeper, " that you have actually seen any of these horrible sights?"

The old lady shook her head, and observed that it was not for her to speak of the strange sights she had seen in the family she had so long and faithfully served.

" One thing I will tell you," she added; " for although I was but a girl when it occurred, I remember it as distinctly as if it had happened only yesterday!"

The domestics crowded round the speaker, every eye earnestly fixed upon her countenance, anxious to discover, if possible, whether she were in earnest, or sporting with their credulity.

" I had been sent for," she continued, " to assist my grandmother, the housekeeper, at Carrow, at the time of the Lady Blanche's marriage: half the nobility of the country were present. Well, the wedding passed over, the garter was dropped—they kept up all such odd customs in those days—and the bride retired to rest, when the dancers in the long gallery were startled by a loud scream and the ringing of a bell ———"

" Well well!" exclaimed several of her auditors, looking very anxious and terrified.

As she was about to continue her narration, a shriek from a distant part of the abbey was distinctly heard: it broke the stillness of the night, like some despairing wretch's cry, struggling with hooded murder.

Mrs. Jarvy turned deadly pale—the maids began to cling closely for protection to the valorous Mr. Flip, who seemed half dead with fear; even old Martin, who had been listening attentively, in his easy chair, half rose from his seat.

" Did y-o-u he-a-a-r it?" demanded the lady's maid.

Not only was the scream repeated, but it was followed by a violent ringing of one of the bells—in their terror they could not distinguish which.

" We shall all be murdered!" groaned the aristocratic footman.

" Worse—worse!" shrieked the duchess's waiting maid; " carried off by the ghosts!"

Martin's first idea was, that one of the domestics, in order to punish the impertinence and incredulity of their visitors, had quietly withdrawn from the housekeeper's room at the commencement of her tale, and given the scream and rung the bell to alarm them; but no—every servant was present.

" This must be seen to!" he said, addressing the butler.

" Y-e-e-s!" faltered the terrified Nicholls.—" Don't look so angry, Martin!" he added; " I am a coward, I confess; but I will do my duty!"

The two aged men took each a pistol from the chimney-piece, and left the room. It was in vain that Mrs. Jarvy entreated of Flip to follow them. " He had every inclination," he said; " but duty prevented him."

" Duty!" repeated the old lady, in a strong tone of contempt; " say rather fear! No matter! I will go myself!"

And the faithful creature would actually have put her resolution into practice, had not the maids thrown their arms around her, and forcibly detained her in her seat.

The report of a pistol was heard, followed by loud and continued screaming.

" It's my lady's voice!" exclaimed the housekeeper, violently agitated; " let me go!"

" There will be murder going on!" sobbed one.

" The ghost!"

Again the cries were repeated. With a desperate effort the aged woman broke from them and rushed out of the apartment, leaving those who remained more dead than alive with terror.

" It is all your fault!" observed the kitchen-maid, reproachfully.

" Mine!" exclaimed Mr. Flip.

" Yours: you would make Mistress Jarvy speak of the ghosts! They don't like it; real quality never does like to be talked about! As for me, I bean't afraid; but you—well—I don't wish to make you uncomfortable, but I wish you well out of Carrow!"

From the bottom of their hearts the domestics of the duchess echoed back the wish; mentally blaming their kind-hearted mistress for ever having set foot in such an uncomfortable abode.

It is now time that we invited our readers to accompany Joe Beans and his companion in their pursuit of the shadowy form which had so strangely disappeared in the pavilion in the shrubbery.

The narrow passage along which they stealthily followed the bearer of the light, was entirely of stonework, and of equal, if not greater antiquity, than the mansion. It had as many windings as a rabbit-burrow, and where the abrupt turnings formed an acute angle, the arch was curiously groined with rude attempts at ornament, consisting principally of heads of monks and saints, carved in the corbels and coigns.

Once or twice the light became stationary, as if the bearer of it had paused to listen. Joe and Ralph paused, too, scarcely daring to breathe. After a moment or two it again advanced.

Joe, who was taking the lead, paused to permit his companion to approach close to him. Placing his lips close to the ear of the boy, he whispered:

" Take off your shoes; I will remove mine. Our footsteps alarm him."

" Ees, Mister Beans!" faltered Ralph.

The light was nearly out of sight before they resumed their way.

After groping their way a considerable distance—made longer by the deviation of the passage—they arrived at a narrow flight of stairs, similar to the one by which they had descended. Both paused to listen.

" He is opening a door!" observed the young man to himself, as he heard the clicking of a spring or latch above.

The next moment the last ray of the lamp had disappeared, and they were left in total darkness. The fear now was that the midnight ruffian had gained entrance to the abbey, and closed the communication upon them. The heart of the young

man beat despairingly at the thought. Bidding his companion follow him, he mounted the steps, and arrived at what appeared to be a solid partition of wood, barring his further progress: a deep groan escaped him as he made the discovery.

"Lord have mercy!" exclaimed Ralph. "What be that?"

"Silence!" whispered Joe; "here is a door!"

"Be it open, Mr. Beans?"

"No!" replied the rustic, despairingly. "Fool that I was to come without the means of procuring a light!"

From this dilemma his companion fortunately relieved him by producing the tinder-box and matches which he had used in the hut of the warrener. A light was quickly procured. It burnt sufficiently long to enable the faithful friend of our hero to discover an iron ring carefully let into the oaken framework of the panel. After pulling and pressing it in various directions, he felt the partition give way, and the next instant he and Ralph both stood in the well-remembered picture-gallery of Carrow Abbey.

"It be all right, at last!" whispered the latter.

The moonlight was streaming through the stained windows, which ran the whole length of the apartment, rendering every object distinctly visible. Joe paused for a moment to reflect, before he decided on his proceedings.

"Stay here!" he said, to Red Ralph, "close by the secret entrance."

"But where beest thee a-goin'?" demanded the boy.

"To my duty! yours is to remain here. You can easily hide yourself behind one of the cabinets. If the pretended ghost should attempt to pass by the way we came—"

"I'll shoot un!" exclaimed the urchin, with an air of determination, "thof I hang for it!"

At this moment the first scream and ringing of the bell, which had so alarmed the servants in the housekeeper's room was distinctly heard. Joe judged in an instant the direction it came from.

"Be firm," he said, "and I'll make a man of you!" Then, rushing to the end of the gallery, he disappeared through the door.

"I'd rather thee comed back agin," blubbered the boy, upon whose uncouth nature the kindness of his companion had made a deep impression, "than have all the gowd they say is buried at Cromwell House! I do wish I knowed how to pray for un! God bless un! that can't do un harm, at any rate, thof it does come from the heart of a poor, ignorant crittur! So I say again, God bless un! And now," he added, carefully examining the priming of his pistol; "now for the ghost! I should like to have a pop at un!"

So saying, he ensconced himself, as Joe had directed, behind one of the massive cabinets, which was placed in such a position that he could see all who entered the gallery, either at the east or west end, without being perceived by any intruders.

Never in the course of his brief existence had the lad endured such intense anxiety as whilst watching the entrance to the secret passage; but in the midst of his hesitation he felt proud. Joe—his friend, his benefactor—had trusted him: they might have torn him in pieces before he would have abandoned his post.

We must now follow the footsteps of Joe to the chamber of Ellen and Lady Mowbray. The screams of the unhappy lady easily directed him towards it.

Colonel Mowbray—for the pretended ghost was no other than the infamous brother of the murdered baronet—had easily obtained access to the apartment by means of a key which he had caused to be made during the imprisonment of his niece, in order to aid the mad passion of Meagan Hafaz; though useless then, it served his purpose on the present occasion.

Ellen and her aunt were both sleeping: a smile was on the half-open lips of the fair girl—for her dreams were happy ones; the countenance of the widow was disturbed.

For a few minutes the sight of so much loveliness and suffering staggered the villain in his design—which, to do him justice, extended far beyond obtaining possession of the papers: for which purpose he had brought the box which his scheming wife had caused to be made—almost a fac-simile of the one containing the papers: his object was to exchange them. This he was determined to do at any sacrifice, even at of life: a 'ough, as a point

of prudence, he was desirous of avoiding bloodshed. His irresolution was but momentary. Holding his breath, he cautiously advanced towards the side of the bed, and began gently to insert his hand under the pillow.

Slight as was the motion, it disturbed the orphan, who, starting from her sleep, beheld, as she supposed, the shade of the warrener bending over her. With a loud shriek, which startled the slumberer by her side, the terrified girl sank into a state of insensibility—which probably preserved both their lives, as it left the robber only one person to contend with—his brother's wronged and outraged widow.

Lady Mowbray's hand involuntarily caught at the cord of the bell: hence the peal which followed'd the cry of Ellen. The ruffian tore it rudely from her. "Who are you?" she demanded, wildly; "and what is your purpose?"

"The box!" whispered the colonel.

Fortunately she had never seen the warrener, otherwise her fears might have exceeded Ellen's.

"Never!" she replied, firmly. "Kill me, if you will; but never will I give up the clue to my lost child—the proofs that I am worthy to bear the name of my murdered husband! What have I done," she added, bursting into tears, "that evil men should thus conspire against me?"

Despite her naturally feeble state, the speaker clung to the casket with the despairing energy of a mother's love. Her cries became louder; the evil passions of Colonel Mowbray were excited. He drew a clasp-knife from his pocket, intending merely to cut her wrists and sever the tendons of her hands—for he was prudent even to the last—when in the struggle his hat and the long, iron-gray wig which he had assumed to make him look like the warrener, fell off upon the bed.

By the light of the night-lamp on the table, his sister-in-law recognized him immediately, and imprudently pronounced his name. The intentions of the monster instantly changed. Murder now became necessary to his safety.

"Fool!" he muttered; "I would have spared you!"

It was at this moment of agony, cruelty, and terror, that Joe Beans, who had reached the chamber, sprang upon him. From his being shoeless, the steps of the faithful fellow had not been heard—so that he took the ruffian unprepared. Seizing him by the neck, he hurled him with resistless force towards the door.

"Save me! save me!" exclaimed Lady Mowbray, clinging to the arm of her protector.

"The box, dear lady?"

"Ah!" shrieked the widow: "gone—gone! Think not of my worthless life—recover it, and I will bless you!"

The energy with which Joe Beans had separated the intended murderer from his victim, had enabled the former to overcome the failing strength of the widow, and retain the casket in his grasp. Although stunned for an instant by the fall, the colonel speedily recovered his self-possession; and darting through the open door, made the best of his way towards the picture-gallery—Joe Beans following him like a bloodhound on the scent.

In the hope of alarming the household, Lady Mowbray once more sought the cord of the bell.

As the heartless schemer entered the picture-gallery at the west door, with his prize under his arm, Martin and Nicholls made their appearance at the east end of the apartment; even the courage of the old groom was staggered when he beheld a figure so nearly resembling that of his old enemy the warrener. His sight was too dim and the place too obscure to enable him to discern the features—or the imposture, since the loss of the false hair and hat, which had been instantly discovered.

The butler uttered a loud groan, and fell upon his knees. Martin, although terrified, steadily advanced; a determination which proved fatal to him—for the colonel received him with a pistol-shot, which struck the old man in the side; he fell, with a deep groan, but was quickly avenged; for, whilst the assassin was feeling for the spring to open the panel, Red Ralph crept cautiously behind him, and, placing the muzzle of his weapon to the small of his back, fired the contents into his body. The vertebral was broken—the intention of the boy had been to disable him.

Colonel Mowbray writhed upon the polished floor, like a serpent crushed in its own blood.

"I ha' hit un, Mister Beans—I ha' hit un!" exclaimed Ralph, with a triumphant shout, as Joe entered the gallery; "he can't play the ghost any more!"

The apartment was speedily crowded by the servants, whose terror had given way to the courageous example of Mrs. Jarmy. All eagerly demanded an explanation.

"Send to the rectory," said Joe, wiping the perspiration from his brow; "and remove Colonel Mowbray and poor old Martin into the library!"

"Not into the library!" exclaimed the assassin, faintly; "I cannot close my eyes in peace in the library!"

"He is thinking of his brother!" whispered Joe to the housekeeper; "go you to the apartment of Lady Mowbray—this is no scene for you; I will attend to Martin and the colonel!"

"Take me to the library, Joe!" whispered the old man; place me in Sir William's chair—I should like to die there! Promise me?"

"I do promise you," said the young man "but cheer up—thee mustn't die yet!"

"Soon—soon!" replied the aged groom; "but not till all is clear!"

CHAPTER LXII.

The dark shall be light,
The wrong made right,
And Bertram's might,
And Bertram's right,
Shall meet on Ellangowan's height.

GUY MANNERING.

SCARCELY had the gray-eyed morning dawned on the hills and woody vale of Carrow, before the rumour spread, not only through the village, but from farm to farm, that another murder had been perpetrated at the abbey. Men gazed upon each other, and asked what it could mean. A fatality seemed to hang over the time-honoured walls of the old mansion, doomed to witness such a succession of terrible events. No sooner did Farmer Ashton and his dame hear the intelligence than they set out at once; theirs was the agony and impatience of affection—they trembled lest their adored ptedson should have been the victim.

"He be safe, farmer—quite safe!" shouted Joe Beans, as he recognized the pony-chaise of his old master rattling at an unusual pace along the broad avenue. "Master Harry be in the library with rector, Colonel Butler and the gentlefolk—not a hair of his head has been hurt!"

An involuntary "thank God!" broke from the lips of the aged couple at the intelligence,

As Joe stated, our hero, after assuring himself, in a momentary interview with the duchess, of the state of Ellen and Lady Mowbray, had joined the party in the library; he found Colonel Mowbray laid upon the sofa, sinking fast, despair and death in every feature of his terror-stricken countenance. Martin, calm and resigned, had been propped, as he desired, upon pillows in the chair of his beloved master. No sooner did he perceive his young favourite, than he feebly extended his hand, and tried to smile. Mrs. Jarmy and the rest of the servants who were standing around, could not restrain their tears.

"It will soon be over, Harry!" murmured the old man faintly; "but something tells me that the aloe—you see I have not forgotten the name—will bloom yet!"

Our hero shook his head; his hopes of discovering the heir of his benefactor were buried in the grave of his friend Walter.

"Pray, Colonel Mowbray," said the rector, "reflect upon your dangerous state—make some atonement for the crimes you have committed—do not rush into the presence of your Maker with more crimes than those you have already committed upon your soul?"

"Is there no hope?" groaned the dying man.

The surgeons, who were standing near, assured him that there was none.

"Save me!" he said frantically, "and I will tell everything—everything! Life—life! even at the price of infamy! I dare not die yet!"

When reluctantly convinced that his state was beyond the reach of human skill, the despairing wretch closed his eyes and maintained a dogged silence; no effort could induce him to speak.

"Hardened!" said the worthy clergyman, with a

sigh—"hardened to the last! As he has lived, so will he die. May God forgive him!"

Scarcely a lip responded "amen" to the prayer, so thoroughly had his last murderous act disgusted the spectators with his crimes.

Poor Joe was like a distracted man; first consoling Susan, who had been seized with hysterics on hearing of her young lady's danger; then visiting poor Ralph in the temporary custody of the police; next called upon to answer the questions of the magistrates.

Not even at the death of Sir Willian had such confusion reigned throughout the Abbey of Carrow.

The door of the library opened, and, to the astonishment of all, the widowed Lady Mowbray—notwithstanding the sufferings, both mental and bodily, which she had endured—entered the apartment, leaning on the arm of the Duchess of Devonshire. Although her cheek was deadly pale, and her whole frame so weak that she could scarcely support herself, her maternal heart was strong; she came to make a last appeal to her enemy, to give her some clue to her abandoned son.

"Walter," she said, "like you I am dying; in a few hours, perhaps, we shall both stand before the judgment seat! Something tells me that to you I owe the misery of my life—my dishonour in the eyes of the world—the loss of my dear husband's love—of my poor boy! Be generous—let me embrace the image of his father ere I die, and at the bar of heaven my prayer shall be for mercy for your crimes?"

A sneer curled the lips of Colonel Mowbray; although dying, his heart was not touched by her appeal.

"Man!" she exclaimed, sinking on her knees by the side of the sofa; "if you are human, feel for a mother's agony! It is no small bribe I offer; for giveness of wrongs like mine! I have been driven from my home—outrage has made me sleep my hands in blood!—cruelly driven me mad—do you mark me, mad! My youth a blank—my age a withered, childless solitude! One word!"

"Never!" muttered the wretched man, with a look of fiend-like malice; "the only consolation I have left me is, that my death will destroy the last hope of your existence!"

"Monster!" exclaimed a deep voice near him.

"Whose voice was that? Who spoke?"

With a painful effort, Colonel Mowbray turned his head upon the pillow, and encountered the indignant glance of Henry Ashton.

The distracted widow grasped the hand of her persecutor, and, in the most pathetic accents, conjured him to relent. But all was useless. The sight of her tears and agony seemed an alleviation to his pangs.

"You know what it is now to suffer!" he gasped. "Ha! the secret dies with me! You shall not even have the satisfaction of knowing whether your brat lives, or rots, like his father, in the grave! I loved you once," he added; "but woman-like you preferred the rich brother to the poor one!"

"Have you no heart?" said the rector.

"None that your sophistry can touch! I have no faith in repentance and the lies which you churchmen preach! You are right!" added the assassin, glaring on his crushed and broken-hearted victim. "The whisperings of your fancy did not deceive you! I incited the fool Lucas to believe you loved him—planned with him the scheme which lured you to your ruin! I would have seen you a dishonoured, guilty, creeping thing! That failed!" he continued, moodily; "but at least I leave you a childlike!"

"God restrain me!" exclaimed our hero, transported beyond control at the dastardly triumph of the speaker. "I shall forget the debt of friendship due to the memory of Walter, and strike the villain dead!"

"Base-born cur!" muttered the dying man.

"Who says that Henry Ashton is base-born?" demanded a tall, gentlemanly-looking personage, who had just entered the library with Colonel Butler, who had been engaged in another apartment, taking the depositions of Joe Beans and Ralph.

It was the Khan; but his appearance was so changed that, but for his voice, even his own brother, who was present, would not have recognised him. He no longer wore the dark beard which Walter had covered half his face, and his semi-Oriental costume was discarded.

Colonel Mowbray started, and his eyes became

fixed with a look of malice and impotent rage upon the speaker.

"Philip," said the farmer, extending his hand to him, "that be right! Tell the proud man that Harry be no base-born cur, but the son of an honest man! I always said thee wot wedded, like dame and I, to his mother!"

"Philip Ashton! It is Philip Ashton!" murmured old Martin. "Thank God, it will be clear at last!"

"Lady," said the Khan—for so we shall continue to call him—addressing the widow of Sir William with profound respect, "Fear not! Whatever the resolution of that bold, bad man, his malice will be impotent to harm your peace! Your son yet lives!"

A cry of joy broke from the very heart of the long-suffering mother.

"And will be found worthy of your love."

"Your oath—your oath!" exclaimed Colonel Mowbray, furiously.

"Binds me only whilst you live!" calmly observed the Khan. "Fear not—it shall be kept: a few moments more or less will matter little! If the fiends can wait, so can this injured lady!"

The bitterness of the retort inflicted an additional pang upon the dying man, who would have given words but for a few minutes of his former strength, that he might grapple with the speaker, and bury his secret with him in the grave.

"Lift me up, Harry!" said Martin, lightly grasping his hand, "and do not leave me! My eyes grow dim—I would look upon you till the last! Give me some cordial! I must—I will not die," he added, with energy, "till after that bad man! It will bloom yet, boy—the old alce will put forth its long-promised flower at last!"

"What mean you?" exclaimed our hero, bewil dered with the strange hopes and imaginings which crowded upon his brain; "do I dream?"

"All will be clear soon. I told you it would."

The aged groom swallowed the cordial which Mrs. Jarmy held to his lips, his eyes all the while fixed with an expression of intense earnestness upon the countenance of Colonel Mowbray, who was sinking fast.

"Keep me up!"—he kept repeating—"keep me up! I shall outlast him yet! For my dear master's sake, heaven will give me strength—I feel it will!"

It was a moment of anxious expectation to all. The assassin gradually sinking, and yet from time to time making furious efforts to rally his departing strength; the Khan, calm and observant, standing at the foot of the sofa, regarding him.

Lady Mowbray, half fainting from excitement, was seated at the opposite end of the room, facing Martin. Occasionally her glance encountered that of Henry Ashton, and her widowed heart beat with newly awakened emotions.

"Should it be?" she whispered to the duchess; "should it be so?"

Her sympathizing friend pressed her hand in silence.

The death struggle, preceded by the rattle in the throat, relieved them at length from their long agony of suspense. Colonel Mowbray expired: the last words upon his lips, a curse—his last look, one of mingled defiance and hatred.

"Dead!" said the surgeon; "gone to his account at last!"

At the words, Martin pressed the hand of our hero yet more firmly.

"I knew I should outlive the rascal—I felt I should!" he said; "all will now be bright and clear at last!"

CHAPTER LXIII.

Hear me for my cause! and be silent, that
You may hear me. SHAKESPEARE.

No sooner had the death-rattle ceased in the throat of the guilty Colonel Mowbray, and the surgeons pronounced him dead, than the eyes of Martin, who had been gradually sinking, re-kindled, as though he had received from some pitying angel, who had listened to the long prayer of his existence, a fresh lease of life. Raising himself without the assistance of Joe Beans, who for the last hour had been watching him in his chair, he exclaimed, in a distinct tone:

"Philip Ashton, in the name of God, speak out!"

The persecutor is no more, and the hour has come!"

All eyes were turned towards the Khan, whose countenance was calm and impassible as ever, with intense expectation and anxiety. Every one present felt they were about to listen to a strange tale, and a still stranger *dénouement*.

"Perhaps," observed the Duchess of Devonshire, who saw how painfully Lady Mowbray was agitated, "the explanation had better be deferred! This fearful excitement will destroy her!"

"No—no!" murmured the old groom. "I am dying! Now—now let me fulfil my trust! Then, when I meet my noble master in a better world, he may smile upon me, and say, the confidence he reposed in the man who ate his bread has not been broken. Now—now!"

"Right!" said the long-suffering widow, whose heart anticipated that its dearest wish would at last be gratified. "Fear not, dear friend! Joy will not kill me; and I am proof against fresh sorrow!"

"Philip," added his brother, who, with his weeping dame, foreboded the blow which was about to be inflicted on the long-cherished hopes and feelings of years, "if thee knowest anything about that bad man, or the poor lady's child, speak at once, for the credit of thee name, and the dead father's memory!"

Thus adjured on all sides, the renegade commenced his explanation. Every word which fell from his lips was received with greedy ears by the party in the library, who, in their various groupings, would have formed no bad study for a painter: Lady Mowbray, supported on either side by the duchess and Ellen; Martin, his withered hand grasping that of our hero, dying in the chair of his loved master; the body of the colonel, whose countenance, even in death, bore traces of the evil passions which destroyed him, stretched upon a sofa directly under the window, through which the morning sun was brightly streaming; Dr. Orme and the magistrates surrounding the Khan, and the old domestics of the family peering anxiously in at the door of the apartment, from whose panelled walls the portraits of the Mowbrays, for many generations, seemed to preside over the fortunes of their race.

"My justification," commenced the Khan, in his usual calm, unbroken tone, "must accompany my explanation! The old gravestones in the churchyard of Carrrow would reproach me, if I permitted a stain to rest upon the name of Ashton through any act of mine. I address myself to those," he added—"to those who can both understand and sympathize with the yeoman's honest pride and fidelity to the laws of the land whose soil we have tilled for centuries!"

"This delay is agony!" murmured Lady Mowbray, whose eyes, during the last few minutes, had never wandered from the manly features of Henry, whose countenance was alternately agitated by doubt and hope.

"It is known that, unsuited for the peaceful toil of my forefathers," resumed Philip Ashton, "at the early age of sixteen I became a soldier, and enlisted in the regiment commanded by that bold, bad man whose death we have just witnessed. For years I served my country with courage, both in the burning climate of India and in other lands. Our regiment suffered severely at Assaye, where I distinguished myself in saving the life of my superior officer.—Soon afterwards we were ordered home to England. Our quarters were near to London. Little is known, beyond military circles, of the sufferings of the soldier," he added: "for a slight breach of discipline, I was condemned to the lash—to be tied up, like a hound, in the gaze of my fellow-men and flogged! It was not the pain of the lash I feared; it was the disgrace!—One man alone could save me from the agony of such a shame! That man was Colonel Mowbray! He sought me in my prison; and as the price of his mercy, proposed that I should exile myself to India, taking with me a child, which was to bear my name, and pass for mine."

All eyes became rivetted upon Lady Mowbray and our hero, whose agitation became fearful.

"I consented," resumed the narrator—"gladly consented—for in India my old schoolfellow and companion, Musgrave, the father of Meeren Hafaz, had married a begum, or native princess, and was in a position to protect me and advance my fortunes."

"The child! my child!" exclaimed Lady Mowbray.

"Your heart, madam, I perceive, has already divined my secret! a few moments more and your hopes will be confirmed! The fiend to whom I pledged myself, by an oath too terrible to repeat—bound me never to disclose the transaction whilst he lived! Two days before the vessel was to sail, I encountered the man who had brought the infant from Italy to England. From him I learnt that it was the colonel's own nephew—his brother's son—the heir of Carrow! What was I to do? My lips fettered by an oath I dared not break, and still within the power of the colonel, who, instead of procuring my pardon—which he could easily have done—connived at my escape! Still I resolved the child should not be exposed to the perils of the voyage—the hazards of a wandering life like mine; I bore him to Carrow, to my brother's farm; told him a tale of a pretended marriage, and the loss of my wife! He believed me, received the boy, and saved him a——"

A shriek, such as escapes from the heart when relieved from the agony of years, broke from the lips of Lady Mowbray, whose arms involuntarily stretched towards our hero.

"Mother!" he exclaimed.

"My boy! my boy! Here, to this broken heart!"

The next instant they were folded in the fond embrace of filial and maternal love. Oh, the gushing tenderness of that embrace! The long-suffering woman gazed upon him with unutterable pride and fondness, parted the clusteringcurls from his flushed brow, and imprinted there a mother's holiest kiss—the seal of nature's right—then, overcome with the intensity of happiness, sank fainting in the arms of those around her.

Sir William Mowbray—for so, for the future we must call our hero—could have knelt and worshipped her. For years his heart had yearned for the blessings of a mother's love—and the wish was gratified at last. The discovery which gave him a name and fortune, was far less precious than the recovery of a parent whom he could honor as well as love.

"Mother!" he exclaimed, and it was the second time his lips had pronounced the endearing name; "angel of innocence—martyr. Look up and bless your son—bless but with a look, and he is happy!"

The word—the piercing accents of his voice—awoke the long slumbering echoes of her heart. Lady Mowbray half unclosed her quivering eyelids, and pronounced the name of William—his father's name: how proud and happy he felt! The happiness of a whole life was concentrated in that moment.

Old Martin, whose greedy ears drank in every word, murmured a few indistinct words of thanks-giving: he felt that he should accomplish his task, and fulfil the sacred trust his master had reposed in him. Scarcely an eye in the room but was dimmed with tears. The rector was on his knees in silent prayer, and poor Joe Beans was endeavoring to choke the sobs of joy which would rise in his throat at the discovery which placed a yet greater distance between himself and the friend of his youthful days; whilst Dame Ashton and her husband sat gazing in silent but not selfish sorrow, they felt that they had lost a son.

"Could my dear uncle but have known this," thought Ellen, "how would his noble heart have rejoiced! Perhaps from his sphere of bliss he sees and blesses him!"

The Duchess of Devonshire was the first to recover her self-possession. She saw that further excitement might prove fatal to the exhausted frame of Lady Mowbray, and firmly but gently insisted on her being at once removed to her apartment. Henry—pshaw! the fellow had so wormed himself into our heart, we can scarcely bring ourselves to call him by his proper name—Sir William, we mean, would permit no other arms than his to assist his new-found parent; raising her tenderly as a mother would her sleeping child, he carried her from the library to her chamber. Not even the entreaties of Ellen and the Duchess could prevail on him to leave the room till he had seen her once more open her tear-gemmed eyes, and heard her lips pronounce the name of "son."

"Ellen—dear Ellen!" he whispered to his cousin, as the fair girl gently led him from the room; "next to the joy I feel at the discovery of such a

parent, my greatest happiness is that you will ~~ever~~ have to blush in the eyes of the world for the choice you have made! Worthy of you," he added, at the same time imprinting a kiss upon her brow, "I can never prove—but this event lessens the measure of my undeservings!"

"To me," replied the blushing girl, "Sir William Mowbray will be no nearer than Henry Ashton!"

No sooner had our hero and the ladies withdrawn from the library, than all joined in commanding the prudence of the Khan—who further explained to them that, since his return to England, he had succeeded in discovering the party who brought the infant heir of Carrow from Italy, and delivered him to Colonel Mowbray.

"That will lessen the difficulty of establishing our young friend's rights," observed Colonel Butler; "but, unfortunately, the law will require something more where such large possessions are at stake—some further proof!"

"Which I and Mrs. Page can furnish!" said the aged housekeeper.

"You?" repeated the rector, with surprise.

"Yes!" continued the faithful domestic; "I and Mrs. Page, who was lady's-maid in the family, were present when my master's son was born. Dr. Martineau, who attended my lady, pointed out to us a singular mark upon the left breast of the infant!"

"A mark?"

"Was it something like a strawberry-leaf?" eagerly demanded Dame Ashton.

"As like as if it had been painted?" replied Mrs. Jarmy, with surprise.

"There will be no difficulty, then," said the farmer's wife, mournfully, "for Harry—I forgot, I mustn't call him Harry," she added, correcting herself, and at the same time bursting into a flood of tears, "has the mark—I have seen it when he was a child a thousand times!"

"What beast thee crying for, dame?" said the honest farmer, drawing his hand across his eyes to efface the traces of a weakness of which he felt ashamed. "Thee ought to be glad—glad, I tell thee!"

"Glad—glad when we have lost a son?" answered his wife, reproachfully. "What be the use of all thee toil and saving now? Har—Sir William I mean, he won't want it—he'll forget us now—let us go home!"

"That bean't true, Missus," blubbered Joe Beans; "and the knowst it bean't! Master Harry—I can't call him anything else yet—wouldn't forget a dog he had once been fond of: why he won't pass even me without a kind word or a smile, tho' he has come to be lord of the manor, and great, and rich—much less those who have rared and loved him!"

"Could he?" said the rector, laying his hand upon the shoulder of the speaker, "I should despise as much as I have loved him!"

There is nothing so sensitive as affection, jealous of its rights; Dame Ashton would not be convinced, simply because that word was not spoken by the lips of our hero: she insisted upon returning to the farm; and, accompanied by her husband, had just reached the great hall as Sir William crossed it, on his return from the chamber of Lady Mowbray.

"Matthew—doff thee hat!" she said, in a loud whisper; "here be—be—"

She could not say Sir William—the words stuck in her throat; the pride of the affectionate creature gave way, and she sobbed audibly.

None knew her nature, temper, strength, and weakness, better than the child she had reared. Our hero read in an instant the struggle passing in her mind. Throwing his arms around her, with the familiarity of his boyish years, he kissed her wrinkled cheeks.

"Dame—dame," he said, "you would not render your poor boy miserable, by letting him see that this discovery makes you unhappy! Mowbray or Ashton, what does it signify? I shall not love you and farmer less. After my own dear angel mother," he added, "you will always hold the first place in my heart!"

If the speaker did not include Ellen in the reservation, it was, perhaps, that his love for the fair girl surpassed all other love.

"I told thee, dame," exclaimed the farmer, grasping him by the hand, "that thee wor unjust! theof he be rich and great, he won't forget us!"

"Never!"

"Or love us less?"

"More I cannot," replied our hero, returning the

pressure of the old man's hand. "I repeat it—I must ever consider you and your wife as my second parents, and respect and honor you as such!"

"My dear boy," said the rector, entering the hall hastily from the library, "old Martin is most impatient to see you! the surgeons say that he has not an hour to live! He has a solemn trust to discharge before he dies!"

"A trust?" repeated Sir William.

"Yes!" answered the rector, solemnly; "from your dead father!"

"I follow you instantly—instantly! You hear," he added, turning to the farmer and his wife, "I am summoned in a name it would be sacrilege to disregard!"

So saying, he followed the rector into the library.

"He be our own boy in heart, though not in blood!" exclaimed the dame, looking after him with a glance of gratified affection. "How prettily he did speak! I didn't he, Matthew?"

"That he did!" replied her husband. "I knew all the time that his heart wor in the right place! He is worthy of his good fortune!"

"But he won't owe it to us!" observed his wife, regretfully.

"No matter who he owes it to," answered the honest farmer, "he deserves it! Come along!" he added; "if our fire-side be at times a bit lonely, we shall know that he is happy—and that will be enough!"

"Didn't I tell thee so?" said Joe Beans, who had overheard the last observation of his former master.

"Thee didst, lad—thee didst!"

"Why he shock me by the hand as he passed me just now in the library, afore all the gentry. His heart be all gold! there beant a bit of pride in it! But I must be off!"

The aged couple demanded where Joe was compelled to be off to. The praise of our hero was so grateful to them, they would willingly have detained him to listen to it.

"I must go and see poor Ralph," replied the young man, "who be frightened out of his wits, I dare say. Police have got him!"

"Got him! What for?"

"Doesn't 'e know, mun? Why for shooting the colonel! I wish he had shot him afore he had hit poor Martin!"—added the rustic. "Poor old man! he be a sinking fast!"

The farmer and his wife both expressed the utmost indignation that Red Ralph should be in custody, even for a moment, for shooting such a villain; and the farmer declared that he would bail the boy for a thousand pounds, if necessary.

"For two thousand, Matthew!" said the dame; "for two! Tell him so, Joe! tell him so from me! Pretty justice, indeed!"

Joe promised that he would, and left them, to console the prisoner, whom he found down-hearted enough—terrified at what he had done—in the butler's room, in charge of the village constable and of the city officers.

"Eh, Mister Beans!" said Ralph, his countenance brightening as soon as he saw him. "Thee best come at last! This be more nor I bargained for, I reckon!"

He held up his wrists, and showed the handcuffs which the officers had placed upon him.

"No matter!" replied his patron; "it won't be long!"

"That's what Will Sideler said," observed the boy, ruefully, "when they took him at Cromwell House; but they hung un, for all that!"

"Don't thee be afraid! They won't hang thee!"

"I don't know that!" answered the boy, dolefully. "This be a mortal queer world! But I don't care!" he added; "he killed t'old man, and wor it to do agin, I'd do it! If I hadn't ha' done it, he might ha' killed thee!"

Joe was touched by this simple expression of Ralph's gratitude and attachment to him; and Susan, who was present, felt so grateful, that she absolutely threw her arms round his neck, and kissed the red-haired little monster, as she used to call him.

"Can't ye take those things off his hands?" said Joe, addressing the officer of justice. "I'll be his bail he won't run away! Will thee, Ralph?"

"Not if thee tell I to stop!" answered the boy.

This was a request which neither the constable nor his colleague thought proper to accede to, till Colonel Butler and the rector entered the room, and

instantly directed that they should be taken off. Being magistrates, there was no further difficulty.

"Don't be alarmed, my little man," said the former, patting him on the head; instead of being punished for what you have done, you shall be rewarded! You have nothing to fear!"

"I told 'ee so, Ralph!" whispered Joe: "I told 'ee so!"

"The case," added Colonel Butler, "is clearly one of justifiable homicide. The most you will have to endure is a day or two's detention till the inquest is over; and even that may be avoided if you can procure bail!"

"What be that?" demanded the prisoner, gradually getting more and more at his ease. "I ain't got any, that I know on!"

His rustic friend remembered the offer of Farmer Ashton, who had not yet left the abbey: he not only readily became security for Ralph's appearance before the coroner—which, after all, was a mere form—but induced a friend—a substantial yeoman on the estate—to join him.

The bail bond signed, Red Ralph was restored to liberty.

CHAPTER LXIV.

DIRECTLY our hero entered the library, after the summons of the rector, he advanced towards the chair in which Martin sat, or rather reclined, propped by pillows. The countenance of the old man was pale, as death had already passed his icy hand over its lineaments, and his eyes were nearly closed, but they opened again and flashed with intelligence at the sound of his young master's voice, whilst a smile of satisfaction played faintly as an expiring flame upon his quivering lips, to which he made several attempts to raise the hand extended to him.

"Forgive me!" he said; "forgive me that I summoned you from the presence of those you love; but it was your father's voice—not mine—not mine! I dared not disobey his commands!"

"Had it been otherwise?" replied Sir William, "your slightest wish would have been law to me. Deep as my regret is at losing you, my true and faithful friend, it is doubled by the feeling that my debt of gratitude is still unpaid!"

"Gratitude!" repeated the aged groom, somewhat testily; "no—no! You owe no gratitude to me! For many a long year I ate your father's bread in idleness—but he was good, and would not have suffered a worn-out hound to starve that had served him faithfully; you owe me no gratitude!"

"You must be brief," whispered the surgeon to the baronet; "His recollection is failing him."

"No it ain't!" exclaimed the old man, sharply; "it can't fail me, till I can no longer serve Sir William's son! Let me look on him," he added; "pray let me see him! the room grows very dark, or else my eyes are dim!"

He closed them for a few moments, as if to collect both memory and strength, then fixed them upon our hero with an expression of intense fidelity and love.

"It is my master's son!" he exclaimed; "but you have neither the title-deeds of his estates, the plate nor precious heirlooms of your house!"

"They are lost!" observed Lawyer Elworthy, who was standing near the chair.

"So people think," said the dying man, with a chuckle; "but they are mistaken; Martin has them; parchments—diamonds—gold—all safe—all safe! Sir William did not confide them to the lawyer, or the parson—no—no! he knew better; he trusted them to the fidelity of—the old—house-dog—Martin—Martin—the groom! They are safe!" he added, grasping the hand of the heir; "not one missing—all for you—all for you!"

So exhausted was the speaker by the effort he had made, that for several moments all present thought him dead—for he had fallen back upon his pillow in a state of insensibility, from which, probably, he would not have recovered, but for the skill of the Khan, whose studies, both in the East and with Dr. Guyot, had made him master of many curious secrets, both in medicine and surgery.

Calling hastily for a glass of water, he poured into it the contents of a small phial, which tinged the pure element with a bright opal color, and held it to the lips of the groom: the very odour seemed to revive him. No sooner had the liquid passed his lips, than Martin became suddenly invigorated.

"I am strong now!" he said in a firm tone; "strong—strong! How long will it last?"

"For an hour, perhaps," replied the renegade; "and then—"

"I understand," interrupted the old man, unmoved at the announcement: "that is as it should be! Why should the watch-dog live after his watch is ended? Let all but Sir William Mowbray," he added, in a loud voice, "quit the room!"

It is needless to add that a command, even from a groom, under such circumstances, was instantly obeyed.

"Lock the door," he whispered to our hero, as soon as they were alone.

The baronet did as he was directed.

Drawing the key or instrument which raised the entrance to the secret recess or chamber from his bosom, Martin instructed his young master how to use it.

"Descend!" he said; "you will find them all there—not a seal broken! The deeds—without which your wretched uncle could not have sold or mortgaged a single acre of the broad lands of Carrow—the diamonds, plate, all—all!"

"But I cannot leave you, Martin, at such a moment!" observed Sir William, fearful that the momentary strength of the faithful domestic might fail him.

"The deeds—the parchments!" repeated the dying man; "let me see them before I die! See them in your hands—for to your hands alone I promised to give them! I do not deny old Martin's last request!"

Thus adjured, it was impossible to resist; with a trembling hand, Sir William applied the key to the artificially contrived opening—it refused to turn.

"To the left—the left!" said Martin, who continued intently watching him.

It turned, disclosing the entrance.

"The packet directed to his son, to be read only by him," continued the speaker, "lies on the lid of the coffer containing the papers: secure that—let me see that!"

Our hero hastily descended, and in a few moments returned with it in his hands: impatient as he felt to open it—to read the last lines traced by the pen of the parent whom he had loved and honored as his benefactor and friend—he restrained the impulse and hastened to the side of its faithful guardian, in whom, brief as had been his absence, he perceived a change.

The potion of the Khan was beginning to lose its virtue: life was fast fleeting from him.

"Martin," said our hero, pressing his hand, "is there nothing I can do for you, to mark my gratitude? Have you no wish—no request?"

"Yes! one—one!"

"Name it?"

"Bury me," faltered the old groom, "in sight of the Mowbray vault, near to my dear—dear master! I once thought," he added, "that I should like to have been earthed in the stable: but it was a wrong wish, perhaps, and might only frighten the grooms and helpers—not that old Martin would do them any harm."

"You shall be buried in the vault of the Mowbrays!" replied the baronet: "in the midst of the race you have so long and faithfully served?"

"No—no!" exclaimed the dying man, with a faint smile; "near to the vault. The house-dog should lie at the door—the door! You are sure," he added, looking earnestly into the eyes of the young heir, "that the coffer is safe?"

"Quite safe, Martin!"

"And you will not forget the way to the secret chamber? Remember the—key—turns to the left—the left!"

The difficulty with which he pronounced the last few words indicated that his end was fast approaching. Sir William Mowbray rose from his knees by the side of the chair, and unlocking the door of the library, beckoned to the rector to enter, that he might perform the office of his ministry.

Dr. Orme commenced with the fervor of true piety, the service for the dying. The aged groom listened with evident pleasure to his words, but from time to time opened his half-closed eyes to take one more look at the son of his old master. At the end of the prayer, he attempted to raise himself from the pillow, but was too feeble.

The rector and our hero both assisted him.

"He is trying to speak!" whispered the former.

Sir William inclined his head to catch the last words of the old man.

"Take care of the CHEVAL saddle and the horse cloth, he said, alluding to the trappings of the famous steed, the traditional pride of the Mowbray stables.

"They shall be cared for, for your sake, Martin!"

"God bless you! you will not forget me?" said the gray-haired servitor.

"Never—never!"

"What?" added the old man, with a faint smile, "did you say was the name of the plant—you know—the unsightly prickly plant, which blooms but once in a hundred years—we spoke of it together?"

"The aloe, Martin—the aloe!" replied Sir William, with difficulty repressing his tears.

"Ah!" nodded the groom, "I—remember! I told you it would bloom at last—it has! Old Martin has paid his debt of gratitude, and can meet his master with a smile—a smile!"

These were the last words his tongue could falter. With a gentle sigh, he fell back upon the pillow and expired, his fading eyes fixed to the last upon the heir of the race he had so long and faithfully served.

The baronet laid his hand upon the eye-lids of the dead, and gently closed them; he felt he could do no less for such a friend and servitor. The last duty paid, he followed the rector from the library.

In the solitude of his own chamber, our hero broke the seal of the packet which contained the last writings of his father: of that father whom he had loved and honored as a benefactor and friend—whose virtues he had venerated—whose memory was so dear to him.

It contained the outpourings of a noble, bruised heart, addressed to the son he had so long and deeply mourned; filled with advice drawn from the noblest principles such as experience might give to age: and recommended his unknown heir to emulate the virtues of Henry Ashton, whose friendship he particularly wished him to cultivate.

"Resemble my pupil and friend," it continued, "in honor, integrity, and truth, and you will be all your father's heart could wish—all his instructions would have trained you to!"

With deep emotion Sir William perused the lines so grateful to his feelings—so precious to his heart; they were the seal upon his happiness, and consoled him even for the loss of such a parent.

"Heaven grant," he murmured, "that I prove worthy the name bequeathed by so good a man! To add to its lustre is impossible—my care must be not to disgrace it!"

At a very early hour the following day, an inquest was held at the abbey, upon the bodies of Colonel Mowbray and the faithful Martin. There was no hesitation in returning the verdict—the evidence was so clear. In the case of the colonel, it was, as every one anticipated, justifiable homicide. In that of the latter, wilful murder; so that even if the uncle of our hero had escaped the shot of Red Ralph, he would have had to answer at the tribunal of his country for the death of the aged groom.

Ralph's joy on being informed by Joe Beans of the result of the inquest, manifested itself in the usual series of leaps and gyrations; he wanted to shake hands with everyone, danced and sung in his uncouth way, and cut a thousand antics.

From a feeling of propriety, he was removed from the abbey to the Home Farm, with an intimation from the baronet that he would be provided for. Under the roof of Farmer Ashton he was in his element: the hero of his own tale, which he was compelled to repeat at the arrival of every fresh visitor—the tenants of the estate and the neighboring yeomen crowding to the farm, to learn the real history of what had passed at the abbey. Matthew Ashton said little, but his loquacious dame amply satisfied them.

The body of Colonel Mowbray was interred at midnight, in a retired corner of the churchyard; no stone ever marked the spot; both our hero and the rector felt that it would be sacrilege to lay him by his brother, whose happiness he had so cruelly blighted—whose untimely death they more than suspected he had been privy to. The space he should have occupied in the family vault of his ancestors was destined for the faithful Martin, whom the baronet persisted in his intention of burying by the side of his master.

"That is as it should be, my dear boy!" said Dr. Orme, with an approving smile, when he heard the decision of his pupil; "his sufferings and fidelity deserve even so great an honor; not a tenant on the estate but will follow him. I feel convinced."

"I shall follow him myself!" added Sir William: "it will be the last token of respect and gratitude I can pay to poor old Martin!"

Never had the church of Carrow been so crowded as on the day of the old man's funeral: the farmers for miles round made a point of being present, to honor his memory. Sir William Mowbray followed as chief mourner—Joe Beans and Matthew Ashton next. The procession was headed by the rector in full canonicals, who walked at the head of the corpse. Every head was uncovered as it passed.

Instead of taking his seat, as every one expected, in the Mowbray gallery, over which the escutcheon of the late baronet was suspended, his son entered the pew of Farmer Ashton, in the centre of the aisle—kneel and pray in the same place he had been accustomed to kneel and pray in when a child; which simple circumstance pleased the people more than ever his following one of their own class to the grave.

The sublime words of the funeral service were ended, and the coffin deposited in its last resting-place, by the side of the murdered baronet. Instead of retiring with the mourners, Sir William remained till the church was closed, and then descended alone to the vault, to pray by the ashes of his father.

At the expiration of an hour he left the sacred edifice, and found, on his appearance in the churchyard, the tenantry drawn up in lines for him to pass through. Raising his hat to thank them, he passed quickly on, accompanied by Dr. Orme, till he reached the little gate communicating with the park, where he saw Farmer Ashton and his dame waiting to see him pass, and Joe Beans with Red Ralph standing in the back-ground—the latter grinning and nodding with delight.

Casting a friendly smile towards Joe, the baronet drew the arm of the gratified dame within his, just as he used to do when a boy, and walked with her and the farmer towards the abbey.

"God bless him!" exclaimed Joe, emphatically; "he ain't a bit of pride about him—he be more kind than ever."

"That he is!" said old Chettleborough, who was standing near; "if poor old Martin could only know how he has been honored—in the baronet's own vault—well, he deserved it! Honesty, after all, Joe, be the best policy, both for this world and the next!"

"So it be," said the young man, heartily; "and I only wish I may live to serve him as faithfully as poor old Martin served his father!"

Red Ralph said nothing, but the lesson was not thrown away upon him. After the first excitement had worn away, the boy was observed at times to be sad and thoughtful—the seeds of good were sown. True, the soil was rugged, and had been little cultivated, but they only required time and a genial sun to germinate.

Although Lady Mowbray had suffered deeply from the wrongs and sorrows of the world, the recovery of her son seemed to infuse fresh life into her sinking frame. As she gazed upon our hero, a gleam of something like the sunshine of her youth returned.

It is needless to say that Ellen and her cousin were happy in the prospect before them, which dawned at last, bright and unclouded, as their own pure, youthful hearts.

Although there was no collateral branch to dispute the claims of Sir William, yet it was deemed most prudent by his advisers to prove his right to the title and estates of his father by a solemn form of law—for which purpose a friendly suit was commenced against the executors, to compel them to resign their trust. During its progress, it became necessary for the party once more to return to London.

"It is our last trial!" whispered our hero to Ellen as he handed her into the carriage, in the dickey of which Joe Beans and Susan were already seated: when next we revisit Carrow it will be for the completion of our happiness—the realization of those fond wishes which once appeared so dark and hopeless!"

The orphan replied only by a blush; she knew that he alluded to their marriage.

In order to avoid any manifestation which might be painful to his mother, Sir William had given orders that the hour of his departure should be kept secret; but somehow it transpired, and as the carriages dashed through the park gates, a hearty cheer broke from a group assembled on the common—Red Ralph was at the head of them.

"Hang that boy!" exclaimed Joe Beans, with an air of vexation; "he is always in some mischief or another."

"Not always, Joe!" observed Susan, in a gentle tone, which recalled her lover to himself; "besides, he is very grateful!"

"Good bye, Mister Beans!" shouted the boy; "if thee goes to Mortlake, gi' my respects to the rats at Cromwell House!"

It was impossible to be angry. Joe waived his hand in a sign of adieu as the carriage disappeared over the common.

CHAPTER LXV.

Thus even-handed justice
Returns the ingredients of the poisoned chalice
To our own lips.

SHAKSPEARE.

It is no pleasing task to quit the contemplations of such characters as our hero, Ellen, and his mother, to return to the earthly, selfish beings who possess nothing in common with them but their humanity, yet we feel that our tale would be imperfect, did we not untwine every fold of the tangled web—trace vice to its fitting punishment, as well as paint the reward of virtue.

We feel assured that the patience of our readers, whose sympathy and approbation have cheered us in the progress of our task, will not fail us at the end.

The law's delay has been proverbial since the days of Shakspere, whose philosophic prince complains of it; but where a golden spur can be applied, the cumbersome machine moves readily enough. At least it was so in the case pending between Captain Herbert and his ill-used wife, who had fallen into an artful snare, tempted by the vain hope of recovering the affections of a man who never loved anything with constancy except himself—an egotist in heart as well as mind.

"Well, George," said his uncle, with a good-humored smile as the ex-Guards-man made his usual morning call, to report progress; "how goes on the affair at Doctors' Commons? What say the proctors?"

"That I am certain of success—the case is so very clear!"

"Is it?" said the General dryly. "Here," he added, passing his nephew the morning paper, "is something which may facilitate it. Isabel's mother will have enough to do to look after her own interests. The Colonel is dead!"

"Dead!" repeated Captain Herbert, in a tone of perfect indifference. "How very *apropos*!"

"Very!" repeated his uncle.

"Did he die suddenly?"

"Shot in some ridiculous affair at Carrow, by some wretched little plough-boy! Took him for a scarecrow I suppose; for I perceive the fool had been masquerading. The paragraph is rather obscure, but the main point is certain. There have been some curious discoveries, it appears," he added, "touching the lost son of the late baronet, who turns out to be no other than the rival of Meieran Hafez—another blockhead, whose passions got the better of his reason; yet he had one of the coolest heads for one so young I remember to have encountered."

"Ah, indeed!" said his visitor, with an abstracted air; for, in looking over the military intelligence he had discovered a piece of news which had rather alarmed him. This was nothing less than the arrival from India of Captain Mottram, the brother of his victim—a distinguished officer and a man of unblemished reputation.

"What are you thinking of?" demanded his uncle.

"I—ah!—nothing—nothing!"

"Then pray attend to me; for the time is approaching when this infernal marriage must be settled one way or the other. Sir Jasper Pepper begins to grow impatient. When does Lushington say it will be decided?"

"In less than a month," was the reply.

"Good!" continued the old rogue; "and the bill

in the Lords, with our interest, will take about two more. I have already spoken to the Chancellor on the subject. Let me see—that will be three; then about as long again for appearance sake. Yes,” he added, with an air of satisfaction, “I think I may venture to write to Sir Jasper, that in six months we shall be in a position to conclude the affair.”

“I should think you may!” replied his nephew, with a slight degree of hesitation.

“George!” exclaimed the old gentleman, petulantly, “what is the matter with you? If I thought it possible you were weak enough to entertain any lingering affection for a woman who has made you ridiculous in the eyes of the world, if not in your own, I should discard you!”

Captain Herbert eagerly assured his wealthy relative that he might make himself perfectly easy on that account.

“As to your commission, it shall soon be restored to you. I have already given orders to Cox and Greenwood to purchase the first vacancy. Young Hawks must soon sell out—the astonishment has been, how he was ever permitted to buy in; a fellow with only a palty fifteen hundred a year!”

“Ridiculous!”

“Contemptible!”

The husband of Isabel took his leave in much better spirits. The thought of again resuming his military rank, and continuing the life of dissipation and folly which he had hitherto led, stifled in his breast any faint whisperings of conscience which had disturbed his repose.

“Captain Mottram!” he repeated once or twice to himself, as he drove to the club; “I wonder what sort of man he is? But what can it signify to me?”

As the event proved, it did signify to him more than he imagined.

Herbert was not the only person besides his uncle who noticed the announcement in the papers of the arrival of Captain Mottram from India. The valet of the late major, who had shared all his master's secrets, saw it. The fellow had made one or two ineffectual attempts to obtain an interview with the successful duellist—who, deeming his business of little or no importance, refused to see him.

“Humph!” said the valet, with a knowing look, as he read the announcement; “the game isn't up yet!”

The speaker drew from his pocket a small memorandum book, such as are generally used by men engaged betting in transactions on the turf. It had been his master's, and he had contrived to secure it on his death, before the arrival of the constables.

“Here it is!” he said; “in his own handwriting: both I and my brother can swear to that! He won't see me, won't he! Then he shall see some one else!”

So saying, he put on his hat, and left his humble lodgings to seek for Captain Mottram.

At an early hour the following morning, whilst Herbert was still at breakfast, his servant handed him a card.

“Colonel Vandeleur!” repeated his master, as he read it with a certain uneasy sensation; “I know no such person—in some marching regiment, I suppose.”

“Doubtless, sir!” replied the man; “he looks as if he had just arrived from India, or some outlandish place where the limes are generally sent to. His face is as brown as a berry.”

“Not at home!” said the captain, sharply.

“I told him so, sir!” continued the domestic; “for I knew that you disliked visitors, and expected to meet your lawyers; but he said that his visit was not one of idle ceremony—that you must see him.”

The “must” grated terribly on the ear of the ex-Guardsman.

“If I must see him,” he answered, “be it so—show him in. But first give me a glass of brandy—my nerves are deucedly shaken this morning.”

His valet thought so, too, but made no observation. Silently handing him the liquor, he retired to usher in the unwelcome visitor.

Colonel Vandeleur was the commanding officer in the regiment in which Captain Mottram served, and had just been invalided with him from India. He was a soldier of the old school—a strict disciplinarian, and a man of the strictest honor. He had been present when the valet of the late major sought out the brother of Herbert's victim, and explained to him the treacherous manner in which he had been

killed—that the duel was a previously arranged affair—and produced the book in which the bet had been entered. In his indignation, the colonel not only advised the captain to call the duellist to account, but proffered his service as his second.

“To what am I indebted for the honor of this visit?” inquired Herbert, in his blandest tone.

The stern old soldier looked significantly, first at the domestic and then towards the door.

“Leave the room!” said the captain.

The valet did as he was ordered—but consoled himself by listening at the door.

“Now that we are alone,” observed the colonel, “I will explain the motive of my visit to Captain Herbert!”

“If you please,” observed the gentleman, pointing to a chair.

“It is, to request that he will refer me to a friend with whom I can arrange the time and place for a meeting with Captain Mottram!”

“Captain Mottram!” repeated the conscience-stricken man. “I have not the honour of his acquaintance!”

“He has heard of you!” observed his visitor, significantly. “But if it will in the least assist your recollection,” he added, in a tone of bitter irony, “he is the brother of the man you lately murdered!”

“Murdered!” exclaimed the ex-Guardsman, with an air of insulted dignity. “Colonel Vandeleur, you forget yourself! That Captain Mottram feels aggrieved at the death of his brother, I can well conceive!”

“Can you, indeed!” said the old man, satirically.

“But that he should accuse me of his murder is most infamous! The major, after inflicting on me the deepest injury which one man can offer to another—destroying my domestic happiness—fell by me, it is true! But he fell in fair and honourable fight!”

“Pray, Captain Herbert,” inquired his visitor, with the most provoking coolness, “do men of honour generally bet upon the chastity of their wives?”

“Bet—be—ridiculous!”

“It would be so,” retorted the colonel, “were it not contemptible! That such was the case, I hold the proof in my hand!”

The speaker drew from his pocket the note-book of the unfortunate major. Even the effrontery of Herbert was not proof against such evidence. He was dumbfounded, and hesitated.

“It was a large sum—a very large one,” continued the old soldier, “in your present circumstances—so many thousands upon a woman's chastity—and proves—”

“My confidence in her virtue!” exclaimed the captain.

“Or anxiety to get rid of her!” quietly observed the colonel. “The transaction, I regret to say it, was no less disgraceful to the brother of my friend than to yourself! But have your choice, sir—a meeting within four-and-twenty hours with the brother of the man you so cleverly murdered, or a public exposure?”

“Without fearing the latter,” answered Herbert, firmly, “I accept the first; but on one condition!”

“Pray name it?”

“That the pocket-book in which this ridiculous bet is entered—a bet which, mark me, I neither acknowledge nor deny—shall be given up to the survivor!”

The old gentleman reflected for a few moments before he replied.

“I see your object, sir!” he said. “But I agree to it.”

“Will you give me a memorandum to that effect?”

“No!” replied the colonel, sternly. “It shall remain in my hands till the affair is decided! My honor must be your only guarantee!”

“As you please!” answered Herbert, carelessly—for he had recovered much of his habitual self-possession. “May I offer you—”

“The name of your friend, sir?” said his visitor, interrupting him. “I came not here to exchange empty courtesies!”

“As you please, colonel!” coolly observed the husband of Isabel, who was far from considering himself checkmated—for he was an excellent shot. “There is the address of my friend, Lord Ilford, who, I doubt not, will lend his services on the present occasion as efficiently as he did upon the last!”

“Perhaps not!” said Colonel Vandeleur, placing

the card in his note-case. "Captain Mottram, unlike his unfortunate brother, will come upon the ground fully prepared to defend himself! A man's hand is frequently less steady," he added, in a sarcastic tone, "when assured that his adversary really means to fire again! Good morning, Captain Herbert!"

Although the heart of the duellist secretly beat with terror—for he more than suspected that his success in the late affair had been in a great measure owing to the certainty of the major firing over his head—the captain dismissed his visitor with a smile as bland and courteous as if he had but called to invite him to a festival, instead of a hostile encounter.

"Hang the fellow!" he muttered, as soon as he was alone; "the interview has quite unmanned me! Fool that I was to refuse seeing the major's valet! His visits are explained at last: a few hundreds might have bought the rascal over; but that is too late now! I don't know how it is," he added, seriously, "but my hand does not appear half so steady as it was: as the colonel observed, there certainly is something which gives a fellow nerve in the conviction that his adversary will not fire at him! Poor major! Pshaw! Hang it! If I begin to moralize, all will be over with me! Another glass of brandy!"

In stead of leaving for his club, Captain Herbert remained at home the rest of the morning, in expectation of a visit from Lord Illford. He was not disappointed: about four, the youthful peer, accompanied by Cornet Graham, called upon him: he had seen Colonel Vandeleur.

"Pon my thoul, Herbert," said the young Guardsman, "it's *really* too bad! Another duel!"

His lordship affected a lisp—he thought it interesting.

"What can I do?" replied his friend, shrugging his shoulders; "they will force it on me! You would not have me show the white feather, for the honor of the corps?"

"Certainly not!" exclaimed the peer.

"Certainly not!" repeated the cornet, whose opinions on every occasion were but the echo of his noble friend's.

"I tell you what it ith, Herbert," continued the second; "I have conthulted the meth on thith oecation."

"Well?" anxiously ejaculated the captain.

"They thwink, and I thwink tho, too, that ath we are bound in conthequethe of our lathe affair, the duel muft come off in Franthe or Belgium, or thome plathe of that thort."

The duellist began to breathe more freely: it was at least a respite.

"I've theen Vandeleur, who lithenth to reathon—that's why Gwaham and I did not call before!"

"I am in your hands," observed the captain, "and must submit!"

"Of courthe you muft! tho ith thettled that in eight dayth we meet at Calaith: it giveth time for leave of abtenthe and all that thort of thing! The old boy wath obtthinate at frith," added the lordling, with an air of conceit; "but I talked him over!"

"My dear fellow, I am eternally your debtor!"

"Not at all!" said the peer; "you have been eththwemely ill-uthed—made to look quite widicouth—the wortht thing that can happen to any man—ith it not, Gwaham?"

"Certainly, my lord!" answered the echo.

"Theote the fellow, by all meanth, Herbert: it will make you popular!"

"I'll do my best!"

"And come and dine with me," added the peer; "I ethcthe Alvary, and a few more; quite a quiet thing: we feed at eight!"

The captain was glad of any excuse to fly from his own thoughts, and promised to be punctual.

"Eight days!" he muttered, as he retired to his room to dress; "much may turn up in eight days!"

CHAPTER LXVI.

A heavy summons lies like lead upon me.

SHAKSPEARE.

ALTHOUGH Captain Herbert was one of the least superstitious persons in the world, he could not dismiss the presentiment he felt that the approaching encounter would prove fatal to him. It followed him like his shadow—haunted alike his sleeping and his waking hours.

As the day of meeting approached, the impression became stronger, and the evening before he started for Calais, he passed several hours in writing: when he had done he carefully sealed the papers, and placed the packet in the breast pocket of his travelling coat.

At an early hour the following morning he was to breakfast with his uncle, previous to starting for Calais with his second.

"Upon my honor, George," observed the general, when he saw him enter the room, "but this is ridiculous! You look as pale as a young recruit who has never stood fire! I should be sorry to think that you were afraid."

The captain replied, that from any other party he should resent even the supposition of such a weakness; adding, that he never felt in better nerve in his life.

"Well, well!" continued the old *roue*, whose amiability was not increased by his early rising; "It may be ay you say. 'By-the-bye,' headded, in a careless tone, "have you ever seen your antagonist?"

"I have seen him!" replied the ex-Guardsman, with a shudder. "Ho is the living counterpart of his dead brother."

"That's unfortunate!"

His nephew looked as if he thought so, too. "On me," continued the general, "it would make little or no impression—yet I can understand your feeling: it is like shooting the same fellow *over again*—for you *must* shoot him," he added, with a marked emphasis on the word "*must*." "It is the only way of extricating yourself from a false position. You should have been more careful."

"Careful, general?"

"Yes," continued the heartless man of the world; "careful. Never, in affairs of this kind, give a chance away. You ought not to have suffered Mottram to book the bet—that was your first error. Your second was in repeatedly refusing to see his servant when he called. You ought to have known that such visits were not visits of ceremony."

Herbert reflected for an instant. He could not understand how his uncle became so thoroughly acquainted with his affairs.

"You have seen Colonel Vandeleur?" he said.

"No."

"Captain Mottram, then?"

"Neither one nor the other," answered the old man, drily. "A little more maraschino in my coffee," he added, at the same time passing his cup to his nephew. "There—thank you—that will do! George!"

"Well, sir?"

"You certainly want tact." The captain had sufficient tact to understand at last how the general was so well informed; and he mentally resolved to discharge his valet the instant he returned from Calais.

"Not so much as you imagine, sir," was the reply.

"Ah! I know to what you allude," exclaimed the general; "your arrangement with Col. Vandeleur, that the memorandum-book should be at the disposal of the survivor. That would be all very well, if—not that I presume there is *much doubt* upon the point—if we could be certain *which* will be the survivor!"

"By heavens!" said his nephew, nettled at the cool, easy tone in which he alluded to the possibility of his falling by the hand of Captain Mottram, "you speak as if my death would please you!"

"By no means, George," was the reply; "it would inconvenience me sadly; and you know how much I detest being put out of my usual way."

"Heartless egotist!" thought the captain.

"Conceited puppy!" mentally observed the general; "to suppose for an instant that he has any other merit in my eyes beyond being my nephew, and to avoid trouble, my heir!"

How many men are there in the world who both feel and act like General Bouchier—reckless of the feelings and happiness of others, whilst they are instinctively alive to their own. The evening preceding the above conversation he had received a letter from the unhappy Isabel, in which the betrayed and cruelly abandoned wife appealed to his honor and generosity—explaining her apparent dereliction from duty with the major, and informing him that she was soon likely to become a mother.

"Brand not my unborn child," she concluded,

'with illegitimacy! Let not my innocent babe suffer for its mother's folly!"

As well might the despairing mother have appealed to the statue of Moloch, at whose blood-stained shrine her infant was about to be offered an unconscious sacrifice—the hideous idol could not have been more insensible.

A similar letter had been sent to her husband—what effect it produced upon the captain time will show.

The breakfast dispatched, the hour of parting arrived. Lord Ilford and the cornet called for their principal in the travelling chariot of the peer.

"Do you require any money?" demanded the general, as the groom of the chambers announced them, at the same time opening his pocket-book.

A dry negative was the response.

The old man looked surprised—it was the first time in his life his nephew had declined such an offer.

"Stay!" said the ex-Guardsman, recollecting himself; "there is no knowing what may occur—and a hundred or two—"

"There are five!" replied his uncle, handing the notes with a smile.

The young man drew the letter which he had written the previous evening from his pocket, broke the seal, and inclosed them. Just as he had received the packet, the peer and Cornet Graham entered the breakfast-room.

"We muft be off, George," observed his lordship; "the packet tharithmetic at eight; and it would be very inconvenient to mith the time—fortunately I have ordered hortheth on the woad!"

"Very fortunate!" echoed the cornet.

The duellist answered, with a sigh, that he was ready.

"Your pistols are in order, I suppose?" observed the general.

"Yes."

"Manton's, of course? Be cool!" he whispered, as he shook hands with his nephew, "and hit him in the head or heart—no matter which—but avoid a flesh-wound; in nine cases of ten, your man recovers—and Mottram must not quit the ground alive!"

"He shall not, if I can help it!"

And so they parted—no word of sympathy—no gash of feeling between them; as the general said, his nephew was a convenience. The tie which bound them to each other, was interest on one side and selfishness upon the other.

"The fool is sure to get hit!" muttered the affectionate uncle, as soon as the captain and his seconds had taken their departure. "I never knew a man meet his antagonist in such a humour, that he came back alive! I wish the fellow had my nerve!"

With this cool observation, General Bouchier rang the bell, and directed his valet to bring fresh coffee.

About the same hour the following day, the parties met upon the sands at Calais. Whatever the feelings and presentiments of Captain Herbert—pride enabled him to repress them. He appeared as indifferent and self-possessed as if engaged in a party of pleasure; the countenance of his antagonist was scornful and resolute.

"He ith very like hith brother!" observed Lord Ilford, raising his glass, and eyeing Captain Mottram—for, in addition to his limp, the peer appeared to be short-sighted.

"Very!" echoed the cornet.

Herbert replied only by a slight shudder—the resemblance to the major appalled him.

"Hit him in the thame platiue, George," continued his lordship; "motht likely he ith weesketh there; thome people are vewy weak in the head!"

"Exceedingly!" said Graham, not without a sly glance at the speaker.

Colonel Vandeleur and the peer retired to arrange the preliminaries. It was proposed that the parties, at a given signal, should fire at a distance of twenty paces; that if the first shots missed, the distance should be reduced to fifteen; and on a second failure, to ten paces.

"Thith ith vewy murdewouth!" observed Lord Ilford to the colonel—from whom the proposition had emanated, and who pertinaciously adhered to his point.

"Your lordship forgets," was the reply, "that the provocation has been deadly!"

"Don't egthactly know what to thay," continued the peer; "we never fight the in the Guardth!"

"I dare say not!" drily observed the old soldier; "but you can refer to your principal, my lord. If he objects, it will then be for me to state the reasons which induce Captain Mottram and myself to insist upon them!"

"Yeth—yeth—vewy pwoper!" said his lordship. "I'll hear what George thayth!"

"Anything!" impatiently exclaimed Herbert, when his friend had conveyed to him the proposal of Colonel Vandeleur; "it signifies little—there will be no occasion for a second shot!"

"I hope not!" ejaculated Graham; "you can't fail to hit him!"

"Of courthe not," observed the peer; "it would be ektheedingly widicouluth for a Guardthman to be thot by one of the line—contway to all etiquette; and I'm a gweat thikker for etiquette!"

The terms were finally agreed upon; and the two seconds agreed to throw a guinea in the air, to see which of them should give the signal.

"Shall I call to your lordship?" demanded the colonel.

"No! Let me call to you!" lisped the peer, who had a great objection to taking off his gloves.

"Head?"

"Chance is against you!" said the old soldier.

"Vewy odd!" said the Guardsman; "but headh are alwayth againth me!"

The grim smile which flitted for an instant over the features of Captain Mottram's second was the best commentary upon the observation of the noble speaker.

The antagonists at last were placed upon the ground, facing each other—their hands ready for murder. However society may falsh the custom, or sophistry cast its veil over it, duelling is *murder*—humanity abhors it, and only false honour can justify it.

"Ilford!" said Captain Herbert.

"Well?"

"Should I fall?"

"Fall!" interrupted the peer; "how vewy widicouluth!"

"Still it is possible," continued his principal; "you will find a sealed packet in my pocket; promise me to deliver it with your own hands to—" He would have said Isabel, but somehow the word quivered upon his lips—so he substituted for the name of the woman he had so cruelly injured, "to Mrs. Herbert!"

"Thertainly—if you with it!"

"I do wish it, most sincerely—remember, with your own hands; and above all, do not let General Bouchier know of it!"

The peer nodded, to intimate that he perfectly understood him, and withdrew with Graham to a short distance, whilst Colonel Vandeleur gave the signal. Both raised their arms, and fired deliberately.

"Good gwathioush!" exclaimed Lord Ilford, as Captain Herbert, who had received his antagonist's ball through his heart, bounded several feet from the sands, and then fell back a corse. "George ith hit!"

"By one of the line, too!" added Cornet Graham, with an expression of intense disgust; "quite a discredit upon the Guards!"

"Quite!" answered the peer emphatically.

The victor had not entirely escaped—the bullet from Captain Herbert's pistol had pierced his side: he was severely wounded, but not mortally.

"Is he dead?" he demanded, as he leaned on the shoulder of Colonel Vandeleur for support.

"Shot through the heart!" was the reply.

"My brother is avenged!" said the wounded man, with an air of satisfaction. "I have done my duty!"

The difficulties which would probably result from the duel had been foreseen. Lord Ilford, after directing his servant to convey the body of his friend to Calais, stepped into his carriage, followed by Graham—but not till they had both taken a ceremonious leave of Vandeleur and Mottram—and started for Ostend. As their passports were perfectly *en regle*, and the postillions well paid, they reached the frontiers of the Netherlands before the French authorities could intercept them.

It would be fruitless to try such a project now. The electric telegraph performs the functions of the police, and the fugitive is arrested at the very moment he deems that he has escaped the laws he

has braved. From Ostend the two seconds sailed to England.

When the general was informed of his nephew's death, he appeared unusually excited. It was not sorrow he displayed, but annoyance. Miss Pepper rose like an ill-omened shadow before him.

"Curse the fellow!" he muttered; "had he only married her, all this might have been spared!"

At the thought, his hatred to the unhappy Isabel increased. Although possessed of little feeling, General Bouchier was a strict stickler for the proprieties of life. He dined that day alone. Whether it was that he had indulged too freely, or that the vexation he had undergone had affected him, he complained to his valet, as he assisted him to undress, of an oppression about the head—in any other man, probably, it would have been at the heart.

"Shall I send for Sir Henry Halford?" demanded the domestic.

"No; the morning will do. I feel sleepy; doubtless it will pass away."

The valet, however, was far from being satisfied, and ventured to remind his master that he had not lately been cupped—an operation which the general was in the habit of indulging in every month.

"No matter!" exclaimed the old man, pettishly; "it will have passed in the morning!"

The speaker was right. In the morning it had passed away, and with it the life of the heartless voluntary—who was discovered, cold and dead in his bed, by his valet.

As he died intestate, his immense wealth, which would have descended to Captain Herbert, eventually fell to his unborn heir, which Isabel died in giving birth to—but not till she had seen her reputation fully established by the confession of her husband, which Lord Ilford delivered into her own hands.

The mercenary grandmother of the helpless infant—the widow of the infamous Colonel Mowbray—tried every scheme to get appointed guardian to the child; but, being defeated, finally retired to Boulogne, where she lived, miserable and dissatisfied, upon the annuity which her first husband had left her, despised by all who knew her.

CHAPTER LXVII.

Peace—the charm's wound up.

SHAKSPEARE.

ALTHOUGH the suit between Sir William Mowbray and the executors was in every sense of the word a friendly one, yet—thanks to the proverbial delay of the law—nearly three months elapsed before the right of our hero to the name of which he had been so long deprived was firmly established, beyond the possibility of any future litigation. The time, however, was not passed unhappily. In the society of Ellen the hours flew lightly, poised on the wings of love and hope.

The important decision was at last pronounced, and nothing remained but the formal consent of the Chancellor to his marriage—which, as there was no longer any inequality of birth or fortune to be alleged, that high functionary, after some little hesitation, gave.

Not to have hesitated would have been, in the late Lord Eldon, to have done violence to his conscience, and belied the precepts of his life. His was made up of doubts and hesitations: he doubted everything—his own judgment—even himself, at last.

It was the wish of Ellen that her marriage should be celebrated at Carrow—and as it was one of those few points in which the will of the lady is law, Sir William acceded to it. Orders were accordingly given for their return to Carrow—the Duchess of Devonshire, whose stay in England was limited, accompanying them.

What a picture of felicity did the happy lover draw from a life of usefulness and virtue, passed in the midst of the inheritance so unexpectedly become his! Improving the condition of his tenantry, emulating the virtues of his father, Ellen for his wife—Ellen to be the mother of his children. At times he felt intoxicated at the prospect of his bliss—it seemed too great to be real.

If the happiness of the fair girl who had endured so much was of a more tranquil nature, it was equally deep and real—for her heart went with her

hand—her pure, unsullied heart, rich in woman's truth and love's first sympathies—sweet as the flower fresh with spring's earliest dew, ere the sun-god's rays have drunk their perfumed breath.

Such a heart is the most precious gift heaven can bestow, or man receive.

It was arranged that Joe Beans—the faithful Jos—and Susan should be married at the same time: the worthy rector willingly agreeing to tie the nuptial knot for both.

The evening before their departure, Sir William Mowbray was informed that the Khan wished to see him; and descending to the library, he found his long-supposed parent prepared for a journey. A chaise, too, was waiting at the door.

"What!" said our hero, "do you start for Carrow before us?"

"Not for Carrow!" replied the old man mournfully, "but India."

"India!" repeated the baronet, in a tone of disappointment and surprise.

"Yes. I have paid the debt to honor and to justice!" resumed the old man; "the debt due to gratitude and friendship still remains! The widowed mother of Meera Hafaz must learn from my lips that she is a childless woman! Her husband was my benefactor—my friend—need I say more? Do we part in peace?"

"In peace!" exclaimed Sir William, extending his hand; "more—we part as friends. In the circumstances fortune placed you in many would have consulted their own interest and safety, rather than the eternal principles of justice and truth.—Whenever my thoughts revert to you," he added, "they will be kindly ones!"

"Thanks!" said the renegade, deeply moved.

"Can I do nothing for you—nothing to prove my esteem—my gratitude?"

"Nothing!" was the calm reply; "you have removed the last reproach from my heart! As for wordly means, I am rich—rich even to loathing. Think not my design," he continued, "ill-considered or unkind—my brother already knows and approves it! Farewell! Be as happy as you merit—and I can wish you no greater recompense!"

Raising the hand which he still retained in his to his lips, he left the room; and before the baronet could recover from his surprise, the rattle of the chaise past the window told him that he was already beyond recall.

Neither Sir William nor his brother ever heard of or from him afterwards.

The next day, according to arrangement, the party started for Carrow.

Far different was the reception of Sir William and his widowed mother on the present occasion, from his tenantry and friends, to the one they experienced on their first arrival. Then respect and sympathy for their long-suffering lady kept them silent; and the claims of their young landlord were unknown; but now their joy was unbroken. A large body of tenants on horseback met them several miles from the common, to escort them to the abbey. A hearty, joyous shout broke from them as the carriages appeared in sight, mingled with cries of "Long live Sir William Mowbray!" "Long live the heir of Carlow!"

"Long live Mr. Beans!" roared Red Ralph—who, mounted upon a colt as rugged and shaggy as himself, had joined in the procession.

Knowing how faithfully he had served his young master, the farmer responded to it with a hearty cheer, which increased rather than lessened the embarrassment of poor Joe—who consoled himself by mentally promising to pull the ears of the little urchin, whose exuberant gratitude had drawn such unlooked-for attention upon him; which resolution, we are happy to say, the events of the day caused the honest rustic to forget.

"Where are the farmer and his wife?" demanded our hero of Chettleborough, the sexton, who was one of the foremost of the crowd.

"At the abbey, Sir William!" replied the old man, delighted at being the first person whom the baronet addressed.

"Right!" said the young man with a smile; "they have but anticipated my wish!"

As the procession moved on, the crowd increased. The entire population of the village was gathered around the park gates, which opened wide to receive them.

Farmer Ashton and his dame, with Jarmy and the old servants, were assembled under the old porch,

No sooner had he alighted, than Sir William shook the farmer by the hand, and kissed his wife upon the cheek, which was stained with tears of joy and gratified affection. Taking them by the hand, he led them, despite their resistance, into the drawing room, where his mother, Ellen, the duchess, and Dr. Orme had already preceded them.

"No—no, Harry—Sir William, I mean!" faltered the old woman; "the housekeeper's room is quite good enough for us!"

The baronet, however, had his way, and the quiet kindness of Lady Mowbray and her friends soon put the worthy couple at their ease.

The rejoicings were continued to a late hour, and the bonfire on the common, which Ralph and a troop of boys about his own age took under their immediate superintendence, was for many a day the talk of Carlow.

"Uncle," said Sir William, who had called upon Matthew Ashton and his wife, "I have two favors to ask of you." He knew the best way to gratify him was to use the old familiar words.

"Of me!" exclaimed the old man, delighted.

"You must not refuse me!"

"Refuse you!" repeated the dame; "well, I should like to hear him refuse you anything! If he does, Harry—Sir William, I mean," she added, correcting herself, "only say 'I will,' and farmer will give in."

"I may not do that!" replied our hero, with a smile; "what I wish is, that you should give up the Home Farm to Joe Beans, who is to be married to Susan."

"Give up the Home Farm! Bless me! Yes—if you really wish it!"

"I do wish it!"

"But where are dame and I to live?"

"With your son, to be sure!" said the baronet, taking the old man by the hand. "We must not be separated, and as I cannot conveniently come and live with you, the next best thing is for you to take up your abode with me! My mother and Ellen," he added, seeing that the old couple hesitated, "both wish it, and I shall not be happy without it."

A request so pressed it was impossible to refuse. Their adopted son, in making it, had hit on the only means of repaying the care and affection they had lavished upon his youth. Wealth they required not—for, as the dame frequently used to boast, "they were rich, and it war all for Harry!"

It was instantly agreed that the farm should be given up.

"But thee said two favors, Sir William?" said the farmer, vainly striving to conceal his tears; "this be one to me and dame."

"Not less than to myself!" observed the young man, kindly; "but the next is not exactly my request, although I most heartily join in it—it is from Ellen."

"Lor!" exclaimed the dame; "what can farmer do to serve Miss Ellen? So rich, and beautiful, and happy!"

"We are about—but remember this is a great secret," said their visitor, with a smile—for he knew how little chance there was of its being kept—"to be married! Now Ellen is an orphan. The rector will perform the ceremony, and the bride wishes the farmer to give her away."

"What, I?"

"Matthew stand father to Miss Ellen!"

"From whom better can I receive my wife, than from him, who has acted as a father by me?" replied the baronet.

It were needless to say that the second favour was granted, even more readily than the first; and their visitor departed, leaving the hearts of those who had watched over his infant years overflowing with gratitude and affection.

"He be our own boy, dame, after all!" exclaimed the delighted farmer; "at least I love him as dearly as if he had been our own."

"I am sure I do, Matthew!" replied his wife, wiping her eyes; "only think—to live at the abbey!"

"Hang the abbey! It isn't that I care about—it's living with Harry—Harry again! But I can't

help it—it do come so natural, like! But, dame," he added, seriously, "we mustn't abuse his goodness—mustn't feel that we are a tie upon him. So, when the gentry come to visit him, we'll just keep to the housekeeper's room. Mrs. Jarmy will be company for thee, and I'll smoke my pipe wi' butter."

"Humph!" muttered his wife, who did not exactly see the necessity of the proposed arrangement, into which, however, she naturally fell after the first few days; confessing that she should pine herself to death, if forced to sit with her hands before her in the drawing-room.

Besides, she was still looking after things for her dear boy Harry—as she invariably called the baronet, when speaking of him in confidence to her husband or Mrs. Jarmy.

The morning at last dawned which was to reward the manly virtue of Sir William and the long-sufferings of Ellen. Although an attempt had been made to conceal from the tenantry the exact day, yet somehow the secret got whispered; and great was the devastation committed in consequence, not only in the garden of the rectory, but in those of the neighbouring farmers. The entire church was decorated with flowers, and the secluded path which led from the park to the sacred edifice decked with evergreens.

The baronet and Ellen were married first—then Joe Beans and Susan.

Farmer Ashton's affection, and the pride of his wife, were amply gratified; for their adopted son received from the hands of the farmer the hand of the fair orphan.

As the carriage containing the newly-wedded pair drove from the porch of the old abbey, a hearty shout was given by the crowd which thronged the lawn, and many a prayer was breathed for their happiness.

And they were happy—happy as a life of usefulness and love could make them. Sir William dispensed the fortune he had so unexpectedly inherited in promoting the welfare of all around. The farmer and his wife resided with him to the last—the contentment of the good dame receiving its completion at being requested to stand god-mother to the baronet's second son, who received the name of Harry.

The Home Farm, too, prospered in the hands of honest Joe and his industrious little wife, who were frequent visitors at Carrow. The only occasion on which he neglected his work, was when he heard the report of Sir William's gun in the preserves; then, despite the pouting of the pretty Susan, and her hints about ploughing and harrowing, the sturdy yeoman would sally forth to join his dear young master—he had always a fresh covey of birds to show him.

As time rolled on, these little interruptions became of less consequence—for Red Ralph, who remained with him, became fully competent to supply his place in the fields and farm-yard. Under the instruction of Susan, he gradually lost much of his uncouth manners, and married an industrious girl, the daughter of a small farmer—who, quite as much to his own astonishment as that of every one else, took a violent fancy to him.

As Ralph used to say, when sitting by the hearth of his own cottage—a gift from the baronet and his lady:

"It war a happy day for I, when I first met Misster Beans!"

The duchess, soon after the marriage of our hero, returned to Italy; but the widow Lady Mowbray remained with her children—blessed, after so many cruel trials, in the contemplation of their happiness, which reflected back, as in a mirror, the dreams of her own youth.

Our task is ended, and yet the pen will linger in our hand. But we must not abuse the sympathy of our readers by longer delaying them. One moral at least we trust they have gleaned from our tale—namely, that it is not sufficient for any of the great purposes of life to possess, like Meenan, the "Will" alone; as the happy husband of Ellen proved, honour, integrity and truth, must find the "Way."



